

OF ANCIENT INDIA

Smarta, epic-Panrāņi and Tānfrika Hindwis Einristianity and kala

S.R. GOYAL

V60: 1111 - 1410









A RELIGIOUS HISTORY OF ANCIENT INDIA (upto c. 1200 A.D.)

VOLUME TWO

SMĀRTA, EPIC-PAURĀŅIKA AND TĀNTRIKA HINDUISM, CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

Dr. S.R. Goyal is the Professor and Head of the Department of History, Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (Rajasthan). Born in 1932, he has had an extremely illustrious educational career. He is an alumnus of Allahabad University, Allahabad, from where he graduated (1953) and then obtained Master's degree (1955) standing 'first class first' in Ancient History. He first taught at the C.M.P. College, Allahabad University, Allahabad (1955-58), and Gorakhpur University, Gorakhpur (1958-70), and is now at Jodhpur University, Jodhpur (since 1970). Professor Goyal is the author of more than 65 research papers and over a dozen significant works which include Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen (1963), Gupta evam Samakālīna Rājavamsa (1969), Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aura Sāmskṛtika Itihāsa (1974), Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha (1982), Guptakālīna Abhilekha (1984), A Religious History of Ancient India (Vol. I, 1984; Vol. II, 1986), Kauțilya and Megasthenes (1985) and Harsha and Buddhism (1986). His doctoral thesis, A History of the Imperial Guptas (1967), has been acclaimed as 'the best analysis of the Gupta period which I have ever read' by Professor A. L. Basham (National Professor of Australia) and as 'imaginative', 'well-written' and 'a model of historiography' by Professor Eleanor Zelliot (Minnesota, U.S.A.). The various theories propounded in it, which have been the subject of numerous research papers, are described by Professor R.C. Majumdar, the doyen of Indian history, as 'deserving very careful consideration' and have obtained appreciation and recognition in learned works and journals, both Indian and foreign. His theory that the Brāhmī script was an invention of early Maurya period has also been described as 'penetrative, judicious and most acceptable'.

Professor Goyal is the Chief Editor of a series of 32 volumes on the entire canvas of Indian History and Culture, two of which, namely, Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya (1980) and Mughal Sāmrājya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa (1985), have already been published. Eminent professors and University teachers of the country are contributing to its various volumes.

Professor Goyal has been a keen student of Philosophy, especially Philosophy of History. He topped in Philosophy at the B.A. Examination of Allahabad University in 1953 and was awarded M.N. Nandi Gold Medal for the same. As a true historian, however, he has a deep knowledge of the original source materials. He has studied in detail the various branches of ancient Indian literature. His two volumes on ancient Indian inscriptions and a forthcoming work on ancient Indian coinage (The Coinage of Ancient India) testify to his mastery over epigraphic and numismatic sources. Thus in him is found a rare combination of three branches of knowledge—history, philosophy and literature,

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Smārta, epic-Paurāņika and Tāntrika Hinduism, Christianity and Islam

> S. R. GOYAL M.A., Ph.D.

Professor and Head
Department of History
University of Jodhpur, Jodhpur

Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut

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KUSUMANJALI PRAKASHAN

Ranjan Building, P.L. Sharma Road Begum Bridge, Meerut-250001

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Published by Shankar Goyal for Kusumanjali Prakashan, Ranjan Building, P.L. Sharma Road, Begum Bridge, Meerut-250001 and printed at Print India, A-38/2, Mayapuri, Phase I, New Delhi-110064. Printed in India.

Dedicated to my esteemed friend
Dr. S.P. Gupta
Keeper, Central Asia Section
National Museum, New Delhi
as a token of
my love and affection for him

OTHER WORKS BY PROFESSOR S.R. GOYAL

SOME OF THE PUBLISHED WORKS

Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen
A History of the Imperial Guptas
Gupta evam Samakālīna Rājavamša
Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aura Sāmskṛtika Itihāsa
Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha
Māgadha Sāmrājya kā Udaya (ed. with Dr. S.K. Gupta)
Mughal Sāmrājya kā Prārambhika Itihāsa (ed. with Dr. S.K. Gupta)
Yuddhakalā (trans.)
Guptakālīna Abhilekha
A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. I
Kauṭilya and Megasthenes
Harsha and Buddhism

FORTHCOMING BOOKS

Harsha—a New Political Study
The Coinage of Ancient India
A Political History of Ancient India (in Hindi, 2 vols.)

Publisher's Preface

The First Volume of A Religious History of Ancient India dealing with pre-Vedic, Vedic, Buddhist and Jaina religions, published by us in November, 1984 was highly appreciated by scholars throughout the country. Professor G.C. Pande (Allahabad), Professor A.M. Shastri (Nagpur), Professor Lallanji (Varanasi), Professor Devahuti (Delhi), Professor Venkata Ratnam (Mysore), Professor K.V. Raman (Madras), Professor B.R. Subrahmanyam (Nagarjunanagar), Professor K. Veerathappa (Bangalore) and a host of others acclaimed the merit of the work. very well received in other countries also. It prompted us to bring out its second volume expeditiously. It deals with the history of Smārta, epic-Paurānika and Tāntrika Hinduism, Christianity and Islam upto c. 1200 A.D. After discussing the sources, philosophical bases, nature and the main features of Smarta and epic-Paurānika religion, Paurānika pantheon, avatāravāda, bhakti, image-worship and the role of the epic-Pauranika religion and rituals as instrument of social change, Professor Goyal has given a detailed and exhaustive history of the Vaishnava, Saiva, Sakta, Saura, Gāṇapatya and other Hindu sects. He also throws light on a number of controversial topics and raises controversies himself in the spirit of a researcher. For example he suggests that the concept of the divine Vasudeva was originally distinct from and chronologically older than the concept of Vasudeva-Kṛshṇa, that the personality of Heracles as described by Megasthenes connection with Mathurā is nearer to the personality of Vaivasvata-Manu of the Vedas and the Puranas rather than Vasudeva Krshna and that the Indian Dionysus described by Megasthenes represented not one but several gods and legendary personages. The present work gives quotations from original sources and exhaustive notes on and detailed references to the recent most books and research

papers published upto the later part of 1985. For researchers, teachers and good students it is an indispensable work.

Some Opinions

"It is the first and only account of its kind, at once critical, scholarly and upto date. All students and scholars of the subject will be undoubtedly benefited from the work."

Prof. G.C. Pande, Formerly Vice-Chancellor, University of Rajasthan, Jaipur and the University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

"Dr. S.R. Goyal, known for his valuable researches in political history, has now earned the gratitude of both students and scholars of Indian religions by writing an extremely useful work on religious history of India. In the first volume he has discussed in detail the Protohistoric, Vedic, Buddhist, Jain and other heterodox religions. He has been eminently successful in projecting in a short compass the major religious trends and schools of philosophy in a lucid style and unbiased manner. The treatment is comprehensive. I am sure this work will remain a standard text-book for the years to come."

Professor V.S. Pathak, Head, Department of Ancient History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Gorakhpur, Gorakhpur.

"For about eight decades students and scholars have been looking for a book of this nature. It is definitely the most standard and upto date book published on the subject so far. The latest researches have been duly incorporated. For many years to come the book will remain indispensable for all concerned."

Professor Lallanji Gopal, Head, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi.

"This is the only work of its kind published to date inasmuch as it treats of all religions prevalent in ancient India, both indigenous as well as extraneous, as also their socio-economic background and aftermath in an objective manner. The treatment is thorough going and interspersed with original suggestions which are, generally speaking, well-based. The book meets a long-felt desideratum and, I am sure, will be found highly enlightening and useful both by the students of the cultural history of India and general readers interested in India's cultural heritage."

Professor A.M. Shastri, Head, Department of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, Nagpur University, Nagpur.

"Dr. S.R. Goyal throws light on a number of controversial topics in his recent book A Religious History of Ancient India and indeed raises controversies himself in the spirit of a researcher. From the student's view point his book will be particularly useful. His coverage is comprehensive and he touches upon obscure aspects of the subject as well."

Dr. Devahuti, Professor of History, University of Delhi, Delhi.

"... the book is a distinct contribution to the subject. It contains not only a survey of the history of the major religious movements in ancient India but also a penetrative analysis of the currents and cross-currents of our religious history. It will be valuable reference work for our research scholars."

Professor K.V. Raman, Head, Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Madras, Madras.

"Your book on religion is very comprehensive and your objective study of materials is really wonderful. Your presentation is lucid and analytical."

Dr. S.K. Maity, Department of History, Jadavpur University, Calcutta.

"The first volume of A Religious History of Ancient India, which describes the Pre-Vedic, Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist religions written by Professor S.R. Goyal, will be of utmost importance to students and teachers alike as it is a comprehensive work which will be valuable as a text-book. Professor Goyal is an experienced teacher and he is well aware of the difficulties faced by students. The book is therefore a must for the students of Ancient Indian Culture."

Professor M.K. Dhavalikar, Jt. Director, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune.

"A Religious History of Ancient India is upto the mark. It is worthy of being prescribed for research students connected with religious history of India."

Professor D. Balasubramanian, Head, Department of History, Annamalai University, Annamalai Nagar.

"I have read Dr. S.R. Goyal's A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. I, with great pleasure and profit. Written in a very simple style the book elucidates the various complicated problems of religious life in ancient India in a charming manner which is sure to benefit both the post-graduate and doctorate students in the field. I have no doubt that this work will be widely welcomed by

those interested in the early history and culture of India."

Professor Upendra Thakur, Head, Department of Ancient Indian and Asian Studies, Magadh University, Bodh-Gaya, Bihar.

"Professor Goyal is to be congratulated on bringing out such an excellent work as A Religious History of Ancient India which was a long felt need. The chapter decisions and treatment of the subject are admirable."

Professor A.V. Venkata Ratnam, Head, Department of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in History, Manasa Gangotri, Mysore.

"A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. I, by Professor S.R. Goyal gives a very comprehensive account of the evolution of Hindu religion from its shadowy prehistoric beginnings through early and late Vedic gods and goddesses and the rituals associated with their worship to the reformist movements like Buddhism and Jainism and the subsequent transformation of Buddhism and its eventual decline and assimilation into Hinduism. The book also takes into account the contribution made by the animistic beliefs and practices of the various indigenous peoples of India to the transformation of the relatively simple Vedic pantheon and ritual into the complex Hinduism of the Middle Ages. The work gives a detailed account of the development of Tantric cult during later phase of Buddhism. The author also takes into account the views of other authorities on religion, thus enhancing the representative character of his study.

Altogether, it is an authoritative work on the early history of Hindu, Buddhist and Jain religions, and will be an indispensable source of information for all scholars interested in the study of Indian religions."

Professor V.N. Misra, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute, Pune.

"A Religious History of Ancient India is an excellent work from many points of view... the author has used both archaeological and literary sources. His proficiency in philosophy of history is also fully reflected in the volume. The result is a critical and comprehensive coverage of the subject."

Dr. K. Paddayya, Deccan College Post-Graduate and Research Institute,

"Dr. Goyal's A Religious History of Ancient India would be extremely useful for the students of Ancient Indian History and

Culture taking a paper on Indian religions and also for the specialists who would find in it a good bibliographical material for further studies."

Prof. B.N. Puri, Retd. Prof. and Head, Department of Ancient Indian History and Archaeology, Lucknow University, Lucknow.

"It is a scholarly, analytical and useful book. I have not seen a book of this type in recent years."

Dr. A.V. Narasimha Murthy, Prof. and Head, Dept. of Post-Graduate Studies and Research in Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Mysore, Mysore.

"It is a formidable work carried out with considerable patience and competence. The scholarship needs hardly any words of recommendation."

Dr. S. Settar, Prof. and Head, Department of History and Archaeology, Karnataka University, Dharwar.

"It is specially useful for students of senior classes in ancient Indian History and sums up almost everything of value said about different aspects of Vedic religion and philosophy, Buddhism and Jainism."

Dr. R.N. Misra, Professor of Ancient Indian History, Culture and Archaeology, University of Allahabad, Allahabad.

"This is a very interesting and absorbing study of Hindu Religion and Indian Culture from the earliest times upto 1200 A.D. The book is very useful for scholars of Ancient History, Religion, Philosophy and Indian Culture. Prof. S.R. Goyal has made original contribution to the study of Indian History and Religion. I commend this book to the scholars who are deeply interested in Indian Religion and History."

Dr. K. Veerathappa, Professor and Head of the Department of History, Bangalore University, Bangalore.

"...is an important contribution to the understanding of religious history of Ancient India. It is particularly important because such a work had not been written earlier......By writing two volumes of A Religious History of Ancient India Dr. S.R. Goyal has done yeoman service in presenting a connected account of religious history. Dr. Goyal's work is very exhaustive and objective. He has not hesitated to give opinions and extracts from authoritative works which differ from his own point of view..... At a number

of places Dr. Goyal has given an original understanding.....The book should be on the shelf of every library. It would be referred to as a standard work by all scholars interested in ancient Indian religious history."

Dr. M.S. Jain, Professor, Department of History and Indian Culture,

University of Rajasthan, Jaipur.

"The book makes an excellent reading and the author has made an original contribution to religious history of the most ancient times in this country. Some of the interpretations given in respect of the religious conditions in the Vedic and Prevedic times are strinkingly original."

Dr. B R. Subrahmanyam, Head of the Department of History and Archaeo

logy, Nagarjuna University, Nagarjunanagar.

On Jacket Cover:

Sarasvatī, Pallu

Garuda, Belur

Courtesy, Arch. Sur. of India, New Delhi.

Author's Introduction

Religion is undoubtedly the most important aspect of Indian culture. In the ancient period of our country's history it dominated the lives and institutions of our ancestors, even if it is seemingly losing some hold in our own age. That is why right from the beginnings of the Indological studies in the eighteenth century it attracted the greatest attention of modern scholarship. Innumerable monographs, many of them by some of the greatest minds of our age, have appeared in India and abroad on the various aspects of ancient Indian religions—their origin, background, founders or main propagators, tenets, canons, other sacred texts, church history, rituals, sects, etc. Therefore it may, at the first sight, be regarded as an overweeningly audacious presumption on my part to make a fresh attempt on such a thoroughly discussed subject. But I have some justification to offer for my venture.

Firstly, it may be pointed out that despite the fact that a vast literature has been produced on the various facets of ancient Indian religions, it is also true that so far no comprehensive work has been written, even in English, which deals with, within reasonable details and authoritatively, all the religions of ancient India—those which took birth in this country as well as those which came from outside—in their various aspects at one place. Most of the works written on ancient Indian religions either discuss particular sects, schools or texts, or the religious condition of a region or period and such other topics. My attempt to describe the entire ancient Indian religious history in one work, divided for the sake of convenience into two volumes (first of which dealing with pre-Vedic, Vedic, Jaina and Buddhist religions was published in November, 1984), seeks to fulfil this desideratum.

Secondly, most of the books on ancient Indian religious history are written either without any particular approach in mind and seek to offer a bare outline of the chronological evolution of a particular religion or sect or attempt to establish the correctness of a particular histortical viewpoint. In the present work, however, a wider approach has been adopted, for wherever possible I have discussed not only the role of the various factors—cultural, political, economic, etc.—operating in society behind the origin, nature and evolution of every religion, but have also delineated the role of that religion as a factor of social change. I therefore feel that my work follows a new, something more than what is usually described as sociological, approach.

Thirdly, during the last three decades or so as a university teacher and researcher I have made some humble contributions to the study of ancient Indian religious history; some of them have been published in the form of research articles in learned journals. I have incorporated the results of these researches in this work so that they may be considered by a wider readership and it may be examined as to how far my suggestions change the generally accepted account of the religious evolution of ancient India. For example, I have suggested that the concept of the divine Vasudeva was originally distinct from and chronologically older than the concept of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa, that the personality of Heracles as described by Megasthenes in connection with Mathura is nearer to the personality of Vaivasvata Manu of the Vedas and Puranas rather than Vasudeva-Kṛshṇa, that the Indian Dionysus described by Megasthenes represented not one but several gods and legendary personages etc. A detailed discussion on the origin, sources and philosophical bases of Smārta and epic-Paurāņika religion, avatāravāda, bhakti and Paurāņika rituals, social philosophy of epic-Paurānika religion alongwith an exhaustive treatment of all the Paurāņika sects and sub-sects, Tāntrika Hinduism, Christianity and Islam at one place has also probably been attempted for the first time in the present work.

Lastly, the present work seeks to incorporate, critically examine and synthesize the results of the researches of other scholars in the field of ancient Indian religious history published upto the later part of 1985. An alert reader will note that while discussing the various topics I have made critical and detailed references to the recent-most books and research papers. If a sympathetic reader will feel that I have achieved these objectives,

even if partially, I should think that my labour has been amply rewarded.

The system of transliteration adopted in the book will be apparent from the following examples: Chāndāla, jñāna, Krshna, samskāra, Īśvara, Śankara, thākura, pītha, Yaśahpāla. Modern proper names of countries, places and individuals have generally been spelled without the use of diacritical marks.

In the preparation of this work I was greatly encouraged and helped by a number of persons. My friends Professor S.K. Lal and Dr. D.C. Shukla and anuja Dr. S.K. Gupta were also good enough to read and discuss with me some portions of this work. I thank them all.

I also thank M/s Kusumanjali Prakashan, Meerut, for bringing it out so promptly and enthusiastically. M/s Print India, New Delhi, took quite an interest in its printing and Mr. Chandra Mohan of M/s Ramarts, Meerut, was kind enough to prepare a cover design according to my wishes. I sincerely thank them.

In the preparation of the Index, Bibliography, etc. I was greatly helped by my daughter Km. Vijayashri Goyal, M.A., and daughter-in-law Mrs. Alka Goyal, M.Sc. Both of them deserve my blessings and praise.

Above all, I take pleasure in acknowledging the help of my wife Mrs. Kusum Goyal and son Mr. Shankar Goyal, M.A., both of whom continued to prompt me to complete this work in the shortest possible time and saw to it that I get every convenience they could provide. I appreciate their contribution in making this venture a success.

For the errors of omission and commission I seek the indulgence of sympathetic readers.

41-A, Sardar Club Scheme Jodhpur-342001 Jan. 6, 1986

S.R. GOYAL



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Abbreviations

AEV	Aspects of Early Visnuism, by J. Gonda	
ABORI	Annals of the Bhandarkar Oriental Research	
	Institute, Poona	
AIHT	Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, by F.E.	
	Pargiter	
AIK	The Age of Imperial Kanauj, ed. by R.C.	
	Majumdar and A.D. Pusalker	
AIOC	Proceedings of All India Oriental Conference	
Ait. Brā.	Aitareya Brāhmaņa	
Ait. Upa.	Aitareya Upanishad	
AIU	The Age of Imperial Unity, ed. by R.C. Majum-	
	dar and A.D. Pusalker	
AV	Atharvaveda	
BC, AIG	The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geogra-	
	phy, ed. by D.C. Sircar	
Brh. Upa.	Brhadāranyaka Upanishad	
CA	The Classical Age, ed. by R.C. Majumdar and	
	A.D. Pusalker	
CHI	Cultural Heritage of India,4 Vols.	
Chh. Upa.	Chhāndogya Upanishad	
Corpus	Corpus Inscriptionum Indicarum, Vol. III, by	
	J.F. Fleet	
DHI	Development of Hindu Iconography, by J.N.	
	Banerjea	
DM	Devi Māhātmya	
EHVS	Materials for the Study of the Early History of	
	Vaishnava Sect, by H.C. Raychaudhuri	
EI	Epigraphia Indica	
ERE	Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics	
FAI,LSAL	Foreigners in Ancient India and Laksmī and	
,———	Sarasvatī in Art and Literature, ed. by D.C.	
	Percenters the state and promised and an and	

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HD	History of Dharmaśāstra, 5 vols., by P.V. Kane
HIG	A History of the Imperial Guptas, by S.R. Goyal
HIL	A History of Indian Literature, by M. Winter-
	nitz
HSI	A History of South India, by N.K. Sastri
HTR	History of Tantric Religion, by N.N. Bhattacharya
IA	Indian Antiquary
IHQ	Indian Historical Quarterly, Calcutta
\widetilde{IMG}	The Indian Mother Goddess, by N.N. Bhatta-
	charya
Ind. Phil.	Indian Philosophy, 2 vols., by S. Radhakrishnan
JA	Journal Asiatique, Paris
JAHRS	Journal of the Andhra Historical Research
	Society, Rajamundry
JAIH	Journal of Ancient Indian History, Calcutta
JAOS	Journal of the American Oriental Society, New
	Haven
JBBRAS	Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal
	Asiatic Society, Bombay
JIH	Journal of Indian History, Trivandrum
JBORS	Journal of Bihar and Orissa Research Society
<i>JBRS</i>	Journal of Bihar Research Society
JGJRI	Journal of the Ganga Nath Jha Research Insti-
	tute, Allahabad
JNSI	Journal of Numismatic Society of India,
	Varanasi
JOI	Journal of Oriental Institute, Baroda
JRAS	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great
	Britain and Ireland, London
JRASB, L	Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal,
	Letters, Calcutta
<i>JUPHS</i>	Journal of U.P. Historical Society
MASI	Memoirs of the Archaeological Survey of India
Mbh.	Mahābhārata
MIR	Megasthenes and Indian Religion, by Allan
	Dahlquist
NIA	New Indian Antiquary
NPP	Nāgarī Prachāriņī Patrikā
NS	Numismatic Supplement
	r 7

OST Original Sanskrit Texts

PIHC Proceedings of the Indian History Congress

PJ Prāchī Jyoti, Kurukshetra

POC Proceedings of the Oriental Conference

PTR Paurāņic and Tantric Religion, by J.N. Banerjea

PTS Pali Text Society

Rāmā. Rāmāyaņa

RHAI A Religious History of Ancient India, Vol. I, by

S.R. Goyal

RV Ŗgveda

SBE Satapatha Brāhmaṇa
SBE Sacred Books of the East

SCT Sakti Cult and Tārā, ed. by D.C. Sircar

TA Taittirīya Āraņyaka
TB Taittirīya Brāhmaņa

Upa. Upanishad

VSMR Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious

Systems, by R.G. Bhandarkar

YV Yajurveda

Chapter 1

Origin and Sources of Smarta and epic-Pauranika Religion

Place of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion in the Evolution of Hinduism

It is difficult to give a difinition of Hinduism because of its vagueness and variety. In fact it is not a religion like Christianity and Islam; it is a way of life. One can pack any good thing into Hinduism. For example Mahatma Gandhi is reported to have remarked, "If I were asked, I should simply say: It is the search for truth through non-violent means. A man may not believe in God, and still call himself a Hindu. Hinduism is a relentless pursuit after truth." In the words of Charles Eliot, "Hinduism has not been made, but has grown." According to Monier-Williams, "Starting from the Veda, Hinduism has ended in embracing something from all religions, and in presenting phases suited to all minds." As pointed out by Swami Nikhilananda, it is quite difficult for an outsider to enter into the spirit of a religion in which he has not been brought up. This objection specially applies to the interpretations of Hinduism offered by those, who do not have a feeling for its teachings.4

Much of the confusion about the nature of Hinduism has been due to its sanātantā and spirit of tolerence which have imparted endless diversity and variety to it. As pointed out by us in the

¹Quoted by Sinha, S.C., in Hinduism and Symbol Worship, 1983, p. 1 f.

²Eliot, Charles, Hinduism and Buddhism, I, p. 41.

³Hinduism, p. 12.

⁴Nikhilananda, Swami, Hinduism, p. 14.

⁵One of the earliest uses of the word Sanātana dharma is found in the Khanapur Plates of Mādhavavarman (EI, XXXVII, p. 312). There, it is described as consonant with the Vedas and Smṛtis (Śrutismṛtivihita Sanātana dharma karmaniratāya). In the Rāmā., it is used in the sense of 'duty recognised long ago' (II. 29.26 etc.).

very beginning of the first volume of the present work, Hinduism did not have a beginning. Its roots go back to prehistoric times. However, it does not mean that it is an unchanging religion. There are two kinds of sanātana or nitya substances—kūṭastha (unchanging eternal) and pravāhī (changing eternal). Hindu religion is sanātana or eternal in the latter sense, for it has not only evolved internally but because of its astoundingly tolerant nature it has incorporated and assimilated elements of other thought-currents liberally. Consequently it branched out into an endless variety.2 It is like a fig-tree, which from a single stem sends out numerous branches destined to take roots and become trees themselves. According to J.B. Pratt Hinduism, which he calls the 'Vedic way', is a 'self-perpetuating religion'.3 Monier-Williams observes, 'And it may with truth be asserted that no description of Hinduism can be exhaustive which does not touch on almost every religious and philosophical idea that the world has ever known'.4

The orthodox religion of ancient India is usually divided under three different heads-Vedism, Brahmanism and Hinduism. This classification is obviously historical and evolutionary. Vedism and Brahmanism are the two phases of the religion of sacrifices while Hinduism may be regarded as representing the phase of Smārta and epic-Pauranika religion (though in wider sense it includes pre-Vedic, Vedic and heterodox religious systems also). In the beginning of their history the Aryans evolved a kind of ritualistic religion in which forces of nature, conceived as devatās were worshipped with sacrifices in which food, meat, soma, etc., were offered to the accompaniment of the muttering of proper mantras.⁵ These sacrifices were performed with particular ends in view. This religion became much more elaborate in the Brāhmana works composed in the Middle Vedic Age.6 But the religion of sacrifice of the Vedic Aryans was the religion of majority; for, as shown by us, even in the Rgvedic age there existed sections of thinkers who questioned the existence of Indra and regarded sacrifice as futile.7 Their voice

¹Goyal, S.R., A Religious History of Ancient India (RHAI), I, p. 1.

²Bouquet, A.C., Hinduism, p. 11.

³Pratt, J.B., Why Religions Die?, p. 122.

⁴Op. cit., p. 12.

⁵Goyal, S.R., RHAI, p. 72.

⁶ Ibid., Ch. 4.

⁷*Ibid.*, p. 87.

was strengthened when the non-Aryan and non-Vedic people (mentioned in the RV as Munis, Yatis, Śiśnadevāḥ, Mūradevāḥ, etc.) began to influence the Aryan society. As a result of this development, in the Upanishads the sacrificial religion was relegated to the background and its place was taken by an ardent search of Brahman, the one eternal entity (sat) to be realized by $up\bar{a}san\bar{a}$, and not by sacrifices. The $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$ also denounces those who follow this-wordly religion of the Vedas (II. 42-44).

However, the early Vedic and Brahmanical tradition, which was always regarded as authoritative and divinely ordained, contributed a lot towards providing the basis for the later mythological stories about the Paurānīka gods, though the contribution of the non-Aryan and non-Vedic thought-current to the evolution of the Paurāņika religion was not insignificant. It has been argued by a number of scholars that the roots of bhakti, one of the most important components of this religion, are traceable in the religion of the pre-Vedic people. In any case it emerged as a strong force in the post-Upanishadic period. In its turn, it led to the emergence of a number of religious cults centring round the worship of individual gods, such as Vaishnavism, Śaivism, Śāktism, the Solar cult, cult of Ganesa, etc. Literary and archaeological data of the early historical period suggest that non-Vedic deities like the Yakshas, Nāgas, Gandharvas, Apsarās and others were already objects of devotional worship by the people in the early Buddhist period. A Niddesa passage refers not only to the Buddhists, Jainas, Ajīvikas and the worshippers of Manibhadra, Baladeva, Vāsudeva, Sūrya, Chandra, Agni, Brahmā, Prajāpati and Nāgas but also to those who worshipped elephants, dogs, crows, etc.3 Thus the Paurāņika cults originated not only from the Vedic deities alone, but also from the worship of the non-Vedic gods and goddesses and historic and semi-historic personalities. The prevalence of these cults, the strength and onslaught of Buddhism, Jainism and other dissenting sects and the disturbances caused by the invasions of the Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, etc. (infra), gave much food for thought to those

¹Ibid., Ch. 5.

²Ibid., Ch. 6.

³Bhandarkar, R.G., Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems (VSM), p. 3; Banerjea, J.N., Paurānic and Tāntric Religion (PTR), Calcutta, 1966, p. 10 f.

who were devoted to the Vedic religion and induced them to write works setting forth new ideologies and practices and effecting a restatement of the ancient Vedic religion. The Smṛtis later theistic Upanishads and Purāṇas were composed to achieve this task of re-orientation. To some extent the same task was performed by the Epics and later on by the authors of the Nibandhas and Smṛti Bhāshyas. As all these works constitute the basic source-material for the Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika religion, we will discuss their chronology, contents, authorship, etc., in the later part of this Chapter.

Relation of the Smārta and epic-Paurānika Religion with the Vedic Tradition

Though the Smartas and the Pauranikas sought to re-establish Varņāśramadharma, their attitude towards the Vedas was not without some reservation. The Purānas set about their task of giving new orientation to the traditional religion by saying that for the proper understanding of the Veda, knowledge of Itihāsa and Purāņa was essential. A famous verse says 'one should strengthen the Veda by (the study and application of) Itihāsa and Purāṇa'. But the claims of the extant Puranas go far beyond this (viz. understanding and strengthening the Veda). At first it was said that the dharma understood from the Veda was the highest, while the dharma declared in the Puranas and the like was inferior. The Devibhagavata P. states that Sruti (Veda) and Smrti are the eyes of dharma and Purana its heart, and that that is dharma which is declared by these three. Later on the Puranas appear to claim priority to (and equality with) the Veda. The Matsya and other Puranas state that Brahmā first thought of the Purānas before all other śāstras and then the Vedas sprang forth from his lips. Several Purāņas are spoken of as equal to the Vedas (Vedasammita). The Purānas also say that reading the Puranas or listening to a recitation of them would destroy all sins. Some of the Puranas indulge in extravagant praise of themselves. The Varāha P. (217.12-13, 217.15-16), for example, states that reading ten chapters of that Purana confers the merit secured by the performance of Agnishtoma and Atiratra sacrifices. Thus the Puranas adopt the same attitude towards the

¹Kane, P.V., History of Dharmaśāstra (HD), V, II, p. 914 and n. 1449.

Vedas as the Upanishads do: they treat the Vedas as authoritative but at the same time prescribe their own mantras, give more emphasis to their own vidhi (mode of worship) than to the Vedic ritual and make claims about their priority to the Vedas and about their own value and efficacy.1

The attitude of reservation towards the Vedas as shown by the Puranas was perhaps the result of the fact that in the various Paurānika sects from their very inception there were elements of non-Vedic origin. The modern Vaishnavas consist generally of the Pāncharātras and the Bhāgavatas. Now, one of the earliest documents of the Pañcharatras is the Narayaniya section of the Mahābhārata (XII, 335-351) according to which there were seven Chitrasikhandin ishis who proclained, on the mount Meru, a Sastra which was at par (sammita) with the four Vedas. This Sastra contained one lakh ślokas and was meant for the common men. As it was intended to direct them both in activity (pravartti) and inactivity (nivṛtti), it was made consistent with the four Vedas. According to R.C. Hazra it implies the originally non-Vedic, if not also anti-Vedic, character of the ideas and practices of the Pāñcharātra system. It is also explicitly stated in the Mbh. that the Pancharatra system is different from the Vedic: 'Know, O saintly king', it says, 'the Sāmkhya, the Yoga, the Pāncharātra, the Vedas and the Pāśupata as knowledges holding different views.'2 Further, the early Samhitas of this sect are not favourable to the Varņāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas. On the other hand, the influence of the Varnāśramadharma on the Samhitās increases with their comparatively late dates. From this Hazra has concluded that the originally non-Vedic as well as anti-Vedic ideas of the Pancharatras permeated in the Samhitas while the idea of reconciling the scripture of the seven rshis with the Vedas found its later expression in the epics and the Purāņas.3

Bhägavatism also was not very favourably disposed towards the Varņāśramadharma and the Brāhmaņas. The Vṛshņis, among whom Kishna was born, were noted for their irreverent attitude towards the Brāhmaņas, and the casteless Yavanas and other

¹*Ibid.*, pp. 915, 927, 934.

²Hazra, R.C., Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, Delhi, 1975, p. 198.

³Ibid., p. 199.

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foreigners were freely admitted into the Bhāgavata fold. The Besnagar inscription of c. 100 B.C. mentions Heliodores, an ambassador of the Greek king Antialkidas, as a Bhāgavata.² The Bhāgavata P. (II, 4,18) also refers to the acceptance of Bhāgavatism by the Yavanas and other foreigners.

According to Hazra the early character of Saivism also does not seem to have been very favourable to the Varņāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas. It is hinted at in a dialogue between Daksha and Siva in the Mbh., in which the latter says that in ancient times he formulated the Pāśupata system which was 'contrdictory to, though in a very few cases agreeing with, the rules of the Varnaśramadharma' and which was 'denounced by the unwise'. It is probably because of their non-Brāhmanical ideas and practices that the Pāśupatas were looked down upon by the The Smrtichandrikā (II. 310) quotes from the Smrti writers. Shattrimsanmata three lines which state that "A man should bathe with all his clothes on if he chances to touch the Buddhists, the Pāśupatas, the Jainas, the Lokāyatikas, the Kāpilas, and those Brahmanas who have taken up the duties not meant for them. But if he touches the Kāpālikas, he should perform Prāṇāyāma in addition." The Kāpālikas, Sāttvatas, Buddhists, Jainas and others are called 'durāchārāḥ śauchāchārabahishkṛtāḥ' in a passage quoted by Aparāka from the Brahmāṇda P. and are classed by him with the out-castes (patitas).2 Examples of hatred towards the Saivas, especially the Kāpālikas, are quite frequent in Sanskrit literature. The main cause of this hatred seem to be their peculiar non-Vedic They cared little for the caste and āśrama manners and customs. rules, admitted foreigners within their fold, allowed Sudras and women to have dīkshā and worship the deity, laid special stress on sannyāsa for the practice of Yoga, and thus encouraged the breach of discipline in society.3

Meaning of Smārta Religion

Thus, the original character of these two religions was most probably non-Brāhmaṇical. By this it is not meant that those who worshipped Vishṇu and Śiva were all influenced by non-Brāhmaṇical ideas and practices and violated the Brāhmaṇical rules of castes

¹Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 156f.

²Hazra, op. cit., p. 201f.

³Ibid., p. 202.

and stages. It, however, does mean that these two religions in their popular character were originally inbued with non-Brahmanical ideas and practices. On the other hand, as pointed out by Hazra, it seems that among the early worshippers of these two deities there was one section of people who, though won over to the worship of these deities, looked upon the Vedas as authoritative, attached great importance to the Varnāśramadharma and Smṛti rules, and did not like to give them up. They may be called Smārta-Vaishņavas and Smārta-Saivas. The Jayākhya samhitā mentions such Smarta adherents to the Pancharatra system. Probably among the Siva-worshippers also there were adherents of the Smārta category. It is undoubtedly these Smārta adherents of Vaishnavism and Saivism to whom the composite character of Paurāņika Hinduism was originally due. As pointed out by S.K. Belvalkar1 they strengthened the Varnadharma, the corner-stone of the Vedic religion and society (which had for generations ceased to exist except in theory), by inventing the device of hypothetical anuloma and pratiloma marriages which brought all the newlyformed ethnical and social groups technically within the walls of the four varnas or castes. For the common man they provided in the form of several codes and treatises a complete guide prescribing for him, as far as possible on the Vedic pattern, exactly what he should do and what he must avoid almost every hour of the day, and every day of the year, and under all conceivable situations. developed the doctrines of the Apaddharmas (duties regarded as permissible under stress of circumstances) and Kalivariyas (actions which, although once permissible and even obligatory, have to be given up in the Kaliyuga).2 These two doctrines, worked out with greatest possible details, ensured a nominal allegiance to the old Vedic religion and social order while actually affording ample scope to the inevitable modifications in beliefs and practices that were bound to emerge with the passage of time. The art of deviating from the past while yet honestly professing to revere it was thus cultivated to perfection. In the religious field these thinkers propounded the theory of the avatāras or incarnations of the Deity, adumbrated long before the age of the Bhāgavadgīta (infra,

¹Belvalkar, S.K., Shree Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on the Vedanta Philosophy, Poona, 1929, pp. 179-81.

²Singh, Ranajit, Dharma ki Hindu Avadhāraṇā, Allahabad, 1977, Ch. IX.

Ch. 3). It was now given an all-round extension so that the varied objects of adoration of the votaries of the innumerable religious sects could all be regarded as sparks, emanations, powers or forms of one and the same Deity - call it Vishnu, Siva or Sakti-howsoever diverse may have been their methods of adoration and modes of worship. They spread the mantle of the avatara theory even over Buddhism and the other heretical sects. They also made organized effort to check the disintegrating tendencies of the countless sects and cults amongst which India was divided by establishing and developing specific places of pilgrimage scattered all over the length and breadth of the land, in connection with which there grew up in time various accredited legends of gods, goddesses, and saints (infra, Ch. 4). Probably such persons were also the authors of the present Puranas, because these works exhibit, on the one hand, the sectarian zeal in glorifying their respective deities and, on the other, try to establish the Varņāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas.

In the post-Gupta period the rise and growth of Tantrikism affected the nature of Brāhmaņism quite seriously. So the authors of the contemporary Puranas deemed it necessary to add chapters on pūjā, vrata, homa, sandhyā, utsarga, etc., in these texts, which they tried to render free from Tantrika elements as far as practicable and infuse them with Vedic rituals. As argued by Hazra occurrence of these topics in the comparatively late Puranas, or parts thereof, and the way in which the Purāṇas denounce the scriptures which imbibed Tantrika influence, tend to support this hypothesis. In the Kūrma P. which was undoubtedly interpolated by the Smārta-Śāktas (i.e., those Śāktas who, like the Smārta-Vaishņavas and Śmārta-Śaivas, worshipped the Tantrika deities, but observed the Smṛti rules with equal devotion), the literatures of the Kāpālas, Bhairavas, Yāmalas, Vāmas, Ārhatas, Kāpilas, Pañcharātras and 'many others of this type' are called 'Sruti-Smrti-viruddha' and are said to be intended to delude those who mislead others. On the other hand, Devi is made to say in this very Chapter: "Sacrifices etc., which are ordained by Sruti and Smrti, are known as Dharma. Nothing else is the source of Dharma; it is the Veda from which Dharma originated". In Kūrma P. I. 16, which was added by the Pāśupatas,

¹Hazra, op. cit., p. 225.

the Śāstras of Kāpālas, Nākulas, Vāmas, Bhairavas, Pūrva-paśchimas, Pāñcharātras, Pāśupatas (i.e., Āgamic Śaivas) and others are said to have been meant for the delusion of those outside the pale of the Vedas, and their sectaries are called 'Pashandas' with whom none is advised to speak. In the Devibhāgavata, which belongs to the Smārta-Śāktas, Devī says to Himālaya: "What is ordained by Sruti and Smrti is called Dharma. What the other scriptures say is the shadow of Dharma. The Veda arose from my omniscient and omnipotent self.....The king should banish from his kingdom those outlaws who forsake the Veda-dharma and take recourse to another.....The various other Sastras found on earth, which are contradictory to Śruti and Smṛti, are Tāmasa pure and simple. Siva composed the scriptures of the Vāmas, Kāpālikas, Kaulas and Bhairavas with the only intention of delusion. For the deliverance of those best Brāhmans who were burnt by the curses of Daksa, Bhṛgu and Dadhīca and were caused to deviate from the path of the Vedas, the Agamas of the Saivas, Vaisnavas, Sauras, Saktas and Gāṇapatyas were written as steps (sopāna) by Śamkara. some places of these works there are some portions which do not go against the Vedas. By accepting these (portions) the Vaidikas do not incur sin."2

From the above discussion it appears that the composite character of the Panrānika religion was due to the attempt made by the Smārta Brāhmaņas to preach and popularise their respective faiths against the heresies, and to establish the Brahmanical rules of castes and duties and the authority of the Vedas among the followers of at least their respective sects. However, as emphasized by Hazra, the composite Dharma, which the extant Purāṇas preach, was not allowed by the orthodox Brāhmanists to be identified with their own ancient Vedic tradition. Though the Smartas tried to exalt the Paurāņika Dharma, it was always regarded by the orthodox Brāhmaņists as inferior to the Vedic. Halāyudha quotes Vyàsa to say: "Nothing other than the Veda is required by those who want purity of Dharma. (The Veda) is the pure source of Dharma; others are called composite. So, the Dharma, which is derived from the Veda, is the best. But that (Dharma), which is contained in the Purānas etc., is known to be inferior". From this it is obvious

¹Quoted, *Ibid.*, p. 226. ²*Ibid.*, p. 226.

^{*}Ibid., p. 227.

that Vedic Brāhmaņas (i.e. those followers of Brāhmaņism who performed the Śrauta and Smārta rites only and did not worship the sectarian deities) continued to exist side by side with the followers of Paurāņika Hinduism though there was a continuous fall in their number.

Ideological Factors in the Emergence of Smārta and epic-Paurāņika Religion

Many factors contributed to the emergence of the Smārta and epic-Paurāņika phase of Hinduism. Let us first discuss the ideological factors. Among these perhaps the most important was the growing popularity of the doctrines of rebirth and karman. As we have discussed elsewhere these gradually changed the contour of the Vedic religion. According to the new ideology, the end of life is not 'to live a hundred autumns' and 'to see the sun longer' (as the Vedic rshis prayed), but to be released from the cycle of rebirth and not to see any autumn at all. Man is in bondage with the prospect of an unending chain of rebirth, and the aim of religion should be to release man from this chain. New legends were created in order to impress upon the people this new doctrine. The last sections of the Mbh., the HV and the Purāṇas abound in such legends. The best known is perhaps of the seven hunter brothers of Daśārņa who were reborn successively as deers at Mount Kalanjara, as chakravākas in Śaradvīpa, as swans in Lake Mānasa and finally as Brahmanas at Kurukshetra.2

As a result of the impact of the doctorines of rebirth and karman an element of fatalism also crept into the Indian attitude to life. Despite the claim that man is the architect of his own fate, in real practice belief in gods as masters of human destiny became stronger.3 In a way it was also a reaction to the ritualism of the Brāhmaṇas which had made gods subservient to yajña. ņika Hinduism Śiva is Kāla, with Yama (called Kṛtānta, a synonym for fate) as his assistant. Kṛshṇa calls himself Kāla, the destroyer of men or worlds (lokakshayakrt). People now saw themselves as victims of an unknown and ineluctable power, which may actually

¹*RHAI*, p. 124ff.

²Bhattacharji, Sukumari, The Indian Theogony, Cambridge, 1970, p. 354. For a detailed study see Kane, P.V., HD, V, ii, Ch. XXX, p. 1530ff.

³Bhattacharji, op. cit.

be the fruits of their own deeds performed in previous births, but which apears as Fate, a mysterious force in this life, if only because knowledge of the previous birth is withheld and causal relation between deeds of earlier births and the present lot is not known. Thus rebirth and karman left a deep impression of fatalism on people's minds.1

Another important factor in the emergence of the Smarta and epic-Paurāņika religion was the reaction against the bloodshed involved in Vedic animal sacrifices2 (cf. the Mbh. episode of King Vasu Uparichara's conversation with the sages). Even in the Brāhmaņas cereals, not meat, has been shown to be the proper sacrificial offering. Numerous stories given in the twelfth and thirteenth books of the Mbh. point out the sin involved in violence even in religious sacrifices. Ahimsā as a spiritual value had unquestionably greater appeal to the public imagination necessitating a revaluation of old religious values. Bloody sacrifices were not wholly given up but they certainly lost favour. Now it was emphasized that the path to release from recurring births lay through devotion, knowledge and works of social service. These were advocated by one or the other rising school of religious thought and practice. Knowledge belonged primarily to the realm of metaphysics and meditation. Deeds of social service were now regarded as inseparable part of religious ceremonies (infra, Ch. 4). Bhakti or devotion was however a somewhat new approach because it was looked upon as a substitute for ritual performances. Devotion means reliance on a personal god for attaining the ultimate goal (infra Ch. 4). The concept of a personal god was foreign to the Vedic religion where all gods were objects of communal worship, and where the object of ritual was worldly bliss. With the doctrine of rebirth this bliss was regarded as illusory and attachment with worldly pleasures began to be condemned as the root-cause of samsāra chakra. Personal gods were, therefore, now primarily sought as liberators although wealth, prosperity and longevity were also prayed for.

Social Factors in the Emergence of Smārta and epic-Paurāņika Religion: the Concept of the Kali Age

The transformation of the Vedic religion into Smarta and epic-

¹Ibid.

²Kane, HD, II, p. 10; V, ii. pp. 944-7; 1646-8.

Paurāņika religion was facilitated by social disturbances also. the post-Upanishadic period the Indian society was constantly disturbed by the advent of foreign tribes such as the Achaeminids. Greeks, Śakas, Pahlavas, Kushāņas Ābhīras, Hūņas and others. who founded extensive kingdoms and settled in the country. Though these foreigners, who were mostly nomadic, accepted Buddhism, Saivism or Vaishnavism and were soon Hinduised, their anti-Brāhmaņical manners and customs and variable standards of morality could not but influence the people. The Vishnu P. describes their impact thus: "The people of various countries will intermingle with them and follow their example; and the barbarians, being powerful under the patronage of princes, and the purer tribes, acting in a contrary manner (viparyayena vartamānāh), will destroy the people. Wealth and piety will decrease day by day, until the world will be wholly depraved. Then property alone will confer rank; wealth will be the only source of Dharma; passion will be the sole bond of union between the sexes; falsehood will be the only means of success in litigation; and women will be objects merely of sexual gratification. The Earth will be venerated but for her mineral treasures; the Brāhmanical thread will constitute a Brāhman; external types will be the only distinctions of the several orders of life; dishonesty will be the (universal) means of subsistence; weakness will be the cause of dependence; menace and presumption will be substituted for learning; liberality will constitute Dharma; simple abolution will be purification; mutual assent will be marriage; fine clothes will be dignity; and water or a temple afar off will be esteemed as a holy place (tīrtha). Amidst all castes, he who is the strongest will reign over a principality thus vitiated by many faults. The people, unable to bear the heavy burdens imposed upon them by their avaricious sovereigns, will take refuge amongst the valleys of the mountains, and will be glad to feed upon (wild) honey, herbs, roots, fruits, leaves and flowers; their only covering will be the bark of trees; and they will be exposed to the cold, and wind, and sun, and rain. No man's life will exceed three and twenty years. Thus, in the Kali age, shall decay constantly proceed, until the human race approaches its annihilation."1 Paurānika account is amply supported by inscriptions. According

¹Hazra, op. cit., p. 216 f.

to the Betul inscription (dated 518-519 A.D.) Mahārāja Samkshobha was bent upon establishing the religious duties of varnas and āśramas (varņāśramadharmasthāpanābhiratena).1 About Yaśodharman-Visnņuvardhana of Malwa (known date 532 A.D.) his Mandasor inscription2sta tes: "He, to whose arm, as if (to the arm) of (the god) Śārngapāņi,... the earth betook itself (for succour), when it was afflicted by kings of the present age, who manifested pride; who were cruel through want of proper training; who, from delusion, transgressed the path of good conduct (langhitā-chāramārgair mohāt.....); (and) who were destitute of virtuous delights..... He who, in this age which is the ravisher of good behaviour..... not associating with other kings who adopted a reprehensible course of conduct...etc." Numerous such passages from the epigraphs of the Maukharis and others may easily be collected.

Trouble was also created for the Brāhmaņas and Vedic religion by the political supremacy of the non-Vedic Kshatriyas, under the Nandas (who were Śūdras), and the Mauryas (who were Vrātya Kshastriyas). A glimpse of this social disorder can be gathered from the Puranas in which there are chapters on the description of the Kali age. The fact that the numerous verses on the Kali age found in the chapters of the different Puranas are common shows that these were derived from a common source, which must have been very old. These chapters give us the picture of a society "in which the people often neglected the caste and Aśrama rules, and were influenced by the non-Brāhmanical and anti-Brāhmanical ideas and beliefs. The spread of the heresies told upon the people to such an extent that the members of all the four castes and Aśramas were affected more or less. The people did not often like to observe the rules of castes and to carry into execution the duties enjoyed by the Rg. the Sama and the Yajur-veda. Their mind was always occupied with the thoughts of money, and they did not hesitate to adopt unfair means to acquire it. The twice-born gave up the study of the Vedas and the performance of sacrifices which were reserved for the 'foolish'. They forsook their own Dharma, became wandering mendicants in hundreds and thousands and worshipped gods with popular songs, but could not attain the supreme

¹EI, VIII, p. 287 f.

Fleet, Corpus, III, p. 146 ff.

They neglected the rules of Snāna, Homa, Japa, Dāna etc., and spoke ill of the Brāhmans, the Vedas, the Dharmsastras They performed various acts on the authority of and the Puranas. the non-Vedic works, lost all attraction for their own duties, cared little for the rules of conduct, mixed with the heretics, and became professional beggars. They alarmed the people with their bad ambitions, bad education, bad customs and bad earnings.....Men of all degrees pretended to be equal with the Brahmans and defied their authority. They did not care for the directions of the Brāhmans in fasting, observing vows and making gifts, but were guided by their own a priori speculations. The Vaisyas gave up trade and agriculture, and earned their livelihood by servitude or the exercise of mechanical arts. In this way the pure Kşatriyas and Vaiśyas were almost extinct, and the prevailing caste was the Śūdra. Purāņas further say that in the Kali age the majority of kings were Śūdras. This political supremacy of the Śūdras made their position felt by the members of the higher castes. 'The Puranas give interesting accounts of this elevated position of the Sūdras. Kūrma-p. says: The foolish (Śūdra) commoners drive away the Brahmans when the latter are found occupying seats, and the Súdra officers of state beat them. The Sudras occupy better seats in the midst of Brāhmans, and the kings insult the latter. Brāhmans, who are less educated in the Vedas and are less fortunate and powerful, honour the Sūdras with flowers, decoratives and other auspicious things. Though thus honoured, the Sūdras do not care to favour the Brahmans even with a kind glance. The Brāhmans do not venture to enter the houses of the Sūdras, but stand at the gates for an opportunity to pay respect to them. The Brāhmans, who depend upon the Sūdras for their livelihood, surround them, when they are seated in vehicles, with a view to honouring them with praises, and teach them the Vedas. Thus even the best of Brāhmans fare against the directions of the Vedas, turn non-believers, and sell the fruits of their penance and sacrifices. The Śūdras, who had knowledge of Dharma and Artha, read the Vedas, and the Südra monarchs performed horse-sacrifices."1

Thus in the 'Kali age' the condition of Brāhmanism became very insecure. Consequently, the Brāhmanists felt it necessary to

¹Hazra, op. cit., pp. 208-9.

make an attempt to re-establish the Varnāśramadharma, the authority of the Vedas, and the moral rules among women, Sūdras and those members of the upper three castes who, being influenced by the faiths other than Brahmanism, disregarded the Vedas and violated the rules of the Varņāśramadharma. According to Hazra, this attempt was made by two sections of people in two different ways; viz., by the orthodox Brāhmanists who first began to preach the performance of Grhya rites through Smrti works, and by the more numerous Smārta-Vaishņavas and Smārta-Śaivas who introduced Smiti materials into the Mbh. and the Puranas to preach Vaishnavism and Saivism as against the heretical religions and also to establish the Varṇāśramadharma, the authority of the Vedas, and the moral rules not only among the Vaishnavas and the Saivas but also among others.1 That this intention was at the base of the introduction of Smṛti-matter into the Mbh. and the Purāṇas is evidenced by the Purāṇas themselves. The Bhāgavata P. says: "Women, Śūdras and the mean twice-born are unfit for hearing the Vedas, and are, therefore, ignorant of performing, in this world, the good (in the shape of) work; for this reason, the sage, by (his) grace, compiled the legend of Bhārata, with a view that their good in this behalf may be affected"; and "Verily, pretending (to compile) the Bhārata, I have pointed out the meaning of the Vedas, and in which (said Bhārata) can surely be found the meaning of (all those subjects of which) Dharma is the first, even by women, Śūdras and others".2 The Devībhāgavata says: "Women, Śūdras and the mean twice-born (dvijabandhu) are not entitled to hear the Vedas; it is only for their good that the Puranas have been written". Therefore, according to P.V. Kane "in the case of Sudrasthe listening to the Bharata was deemed to bring about the same result the Veda does for dvijas."3 According to Hazra also the contents of the Mbh. and the earlier Purāņas (viz. Mārkaņdeya, Vāyu, Brahmāņda and Vishņu) as compared with those of the later Purānas seem also to betray such a motive of their authors. "It should be noted here", he remarks, "that this attempt of the Smarta devotees of the different gods to preach their respective faiths with a view to establishing the Varnāśramadharma and the authority of the Vedas was responsible for

¹*Ibid.*, p. 213.

²Ibid., p. 213 f.

⁸Kane, HD, V, ii, p. 922.

giving rise to Purāṇic Vaiṣṇavism, Śaivism, Brāhmanism, Śāktism etc., as distinct from their popular prototypes."

Sources of Smārta and epic-Paurāṇika Religion: The Mahābhārata
The study of the Epics (Itihāsa) and Purāṇas has been stressed
as necessary for the correct interpretation of the Vedas (Itihāsapurāṇābhyāṇi Vedani samupabṛmhayet). The origin of the epics has
been traced to the Vedas. According to Oldenberg germs of the
epics may be traced to the samvāda hymns of the RV; Max Müller
and Lévi have opposed this view. This much, however, is true that
the Gāthā-Nārāśamsīs, Ākhyānas, Itihāsa, Purāṇa, etc. of the
Brāhmaṇas, whose recital formed part of the Vedic sacrifices,
supplied materials for and developed into lengthy ballads which
later on became the nucleus of the two epics.²

The word 'Mahābhārata' has been explained as "the narrative of the great life-history of the Bharatas". At one place the Mbh. says that it so called because of its greatness, enormity in size and weightiness. Its central theme is the victory of the Pāṇḍavas over Kauravas. Holtzmann's theory that the Kauravas were the original heroes of the Epic is not generally accepted.

To the nucleus of the Bhārata War story were added ancient bardic poetry containing legends connected or unconnected with the life of the epic heroes, sacred poetry dealing with numerous myths and legends of Brāhmaṇical origin, large sections devoted to philosophy and ethics, cosmologies and genealogies in the fashion of the Purāṇas, legends of the Śaiva and Vaishṇana cults and also fables and parables, so that in course of time it acquired an encyclopaedic form. Sometimes it is called the Fifth Veda (Bhārataṁ pañchamo Vedaḥ) or after the name of its author the 'Kṛshṇaveda'. Now-a-days it is regarded as the Encyclopaedia Indica. It itself claims that "yadihāsti tad anyatro yan nehāsti na tat kvachit"—"whatever is (included) there may be found elsewhere; (but) what is not to be found here cannot be got anywhere else."

Traditionally the *Mbh*. is ascribed to Kṛshṇa Dvaipāyana Vyāsa, a close relative of the epic heroes. He is also credited with the authorship of the Purāṇas and the compilation of the Vedas.

¹Hazra, op. cit., p. 214.

Pusalker, A.D., Studies in the Epics and the Puranas, Intro.; Mehendale, M.A., AIU, p. 245; for a detailed study of the historiography in the Vedas, see, Ghoshal, U.N., Studies in Indian History and Culture, Ch. 1.

³AIU, p. 245 f.

But the Mbh., as we have it today, was never the work of any one author nor was it written down at one time. In point of form also it is not a single book but a whole literature. According to Macdonell and many others Vyāsa's work, called Jaya, contained only 8,800 verse. He taught it to his pupil Vaisampāyana who recited it at the time of the great snake-sacrifice (sarpa satra) of Janamejaya, the great-grandson of Arjuna Pāndava. It was then heard by Sūta Ugraśravas who recited it at the sacrifice of Saunaka in the Nimisha forest. In course of these two racitals it became enlarged because of the materials added by Vaisampāyana and Ugraśravas and acquired the form respectively of Bhārata (of 24,000 verses) and of Mahābhārata (of one lakh verses). In its present form the Epic has over one lakh verses divided into eighteen parvans. Actually, however, this enlargement took place in a period of more than a thousand years extending from the date of the Mahābhārata battle (which took place probably in the 9th century B.C.)2 to the Gupta age. "Though it is extremely difficult to fix the time when the floating ballads were first fixed into an epic, the epigraphic evidence makes it certain that the Satasāhasrī samhitā (=the Epic of one lakh verses) had come into existence by the fifth century A.D." Now-a-days scholars generally accept the view of Winternitz according to whom it "cannot have received its present form earlier than the 4th century B.C. and later than the 4th century A.D."3

The Mbh. has come down to us in two recensions, the Northern and the Southern. It has been vigorously studied in the modern period by a large number of foreign and Indian scholars.4 Its critical edition, based on all available manuscripts, has been brought out by the Bhandarkar Oriental Institute, Poona, under the General Editorship of V.S. Sukthankar (and after his demise under the General Editorship of S.K. Belvalkar). One of the important findings of Sukthankar has been that "in our version of the

¹Vaidya, P.L., 'The Mahābhārata: Its History and Character', CHI, II, p.51 ff.

²Goyal, S.R., 'Mahābhārata aura Dāśarājña Yuddhon ki Tithiyān', Purākalpa, 1974, IV, i, pp. 5-12.

^aHIL, I, p. 465; cf. Pargiter, AIHT, p. 77; also, AIU, p. 251.

⁴For a critical review of the progress of the Mbh. studies and the attitude of analytical, synthetic and traditional schools vide Pusalker, A D., Studies in the Epics and the Puranas, Intro., p. xviii-xxxiv; 82-144; CHI, II, p. 57 ff.

Mahābhārata there is a conscious – nay deliberate—weaving together or rather stitching together of the Bhārata legends with the Bhārgava myths". In other words, for some time the Mbh. remained in the hands of the Bhārgava Brāhmaṇas who transformed it by incorporating the myths and lagends of their own heroes. It also led to "the incorporation into the epic of large masses of didactic material, concentrated chiefly in the Śānti and Anuśāsana, especially so far as it concerns the Dharma and Nīti elements".²

The *Harivamsa* (which means 'Genealogy of Hari') which forms an appendix (*khila*) to the *Mbh.*, has more or less gone through the same transformation as the great Epic itself. It contains about 16,000 verses and is also not the work of a single author, nor even of one compiler. It is indeed a collection of legends and myths concerning the glorification of Hari (Vishņu).

Rāmāyaņa

The $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yana$, which is regarded as the $\bar{A}dik\bar{a}vya$ or 'the first ornate poem' is traditionally ascribed to $V\bar{a}lm\bar{i}ki$, the $\bar{A}dikavi$ or the first author of ornate poetry. He is said to have been a contemporary of $R\bar{a}ma$, which is obviously impossible. It is said that $V\bar{a}lm\bar{i}ki$ wanted to compose a $k\bar{a}vya$ describing the life of an ideal hero. He himself designates his work as charita (biography). Whereas the Mbh. has almost lost its epic form, the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$. by and large still retains its original character. As pointed out by Mendendale the sacred character of the Mbh. is not so much due to its heroes as to the didactic sections added to it at a later stage; but in the case of the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$. the sanctity attached to it is due to the inherent purity of its hero and heroine.³

In its present form the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$, now found in two recensions (Southern and Northern), contains seven Kāṇḍas (books) and about 24,000 verses. According to Abhinavagupta, its main rasa is śānta. Its real story begins with Ayodhyākāṇḍa and ends with Yuddhakāṇḍa. The whole of the Uttarakāṇḍa and most of the Bālakāṇḍa are undoubtedly later accretions, for (i) these two Kāṇḍas contain a number of topics which have no, or very slight,

¹Sukthankar, V.S., Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata (Sukthankar Memorial Edition, I, Poona, 1944), p. 332.

^{*}Ibid., p. 334. For a brief cultural study of the Mbh., vide Raychaudhuri, H.C., in CHI, II, p. 71 f.

^{*}AIU, p. 252.

connection with the main story; (ii) it is only in these two kāndas, excepting a few interpolated exceptions in Kāndas II-VI that Rāma appears as an incarnation of Vishnu, whereas everywhere else he is only a mortal hero; (iii) in the genuine sections the Vedic god Indra, and not Vishnu, is given the highest place of honour; (iv) the language and style of these two Kāndas differ from the rest of the Epic, and (v) at the end of the Yuddhakānda is given the phalaśruti which indicates that the rest of the material was added later on. It may also be argued that the original epic must have ended with the coronation of Rāma. The Rāmopākhyāna of the Mbh. also does not carry the story further than that.

The Rāmā, in its present form must have existed at least a couple of centuries before the latest date by which the Mbh. attained its final form (c. 4th cent. A.D.). But as Sukthankar has shown the nucleus of the Mbh. may have existed prior to the nucleus of the Rāmā. Pāṇini (5th-4th cent. B.C.) makes allusions to Vāsudeva, Arjuna and Yudhishthira; but he is silent about Rāma, and so is Patañjali (2nd cent. B.C.) as well as the inscriptions belonging to the pre-Christian era. According to Mehendale the original Rāmā, in which Rāma was a human being, was composed by Valmiki in the third or more probably in the fourth century B.C. which, with the addition of Balakanda and Yuddhakānda and some passages in the other Kāndas, assumed its present form at the end of the second century A.D. when Rāma had already been deified as an incarnation of Vishnu. Interestingly, while describing the crossing of the confluence of Ganga and Sona, the author of the Rāmā. does not mention the city of Pātaliputra, the history of which began in c. 500 B.C. when Ajātaśatru founded the military station of Pāţaligāma. It probably shows that this part of the Epic may be as early as C. 500 B.C., or even older.

The Rāmā. has deeply influenced the religious and moral thought of India for over two thousand years. According to Macdonell, "probably no work of world literature, secular in its origin, has ever produced so profound an influence on the life and thought of a people as the Rāmāyaṇa." It is regarded sacred specially by the Vaishṇavas because they look upon Rāma as the incarnation of Vishṇu. According to many scholars its story is an amalgamation of two, three or even four different elements namely the palace

¹ERE, X, p. 574.

intrigue resulting in the exile of Rāma, abduction of Sītā, legends about Rāvaņa and legends about Hanumāna and monkey-worship. According to these views the exile of Rāma is the only element in the story which has a historical basis. The controversy regarding the location of Lanka of Ravana1 and the absence of definite archaeological evidence throwing light on the story of Rāma have added to the confusion. Since the days of Lassen, who may be said to have inaugurated the Rāmāyana studies,2 down to the present day a host of scholars including Weber, Hopkins, Winternitiz, Jacobi, D.C. Sen, Dahlmann, K.T. Telang, C.V. Vaidya, Hopkins, A.D. Pusalker, C. Bulcke, 3 H.D. Sankalia, B.B. Lal, etc. have thrown light on the various facets of the Rāmāyaṇa problem. We cannot go into details of the views of the various scholars but mention may here be made of the fact that now most of the scholars (1) reject Weber's theory that the Daśaratha Jātaka was the source of the Rāmā. story; most of them do not believe that the entire story of the Rāmā. is allegorical and that (3) at least the story of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa is basically historical. Bulcke and Pusalker even believe that the Rāmā. is a complete unit and that the framework of its entire story (short of its supernatural elements), including the portions which portray Rāma as an avtāra of Vishņu), is historical. According to Pusalker^s the incorporation of didactic material, ethics, philosophy, etc. was done under the Bhargava influence which was also responsible for the transformation of the Bhārata into the Mahābhārata.7 In its present

¹For the various views on the identification of Lankā see Pusalker, Studies in the Epics and Purāṇas, p. 191 f.

²For detailed history of the *Rāmāyana* studies vide Pusalker, A.D., op. cit., Intro., p. xxxix f.; p. 174-95.

³C. Bulcke's Rāmakathā in Hindi is perhaps the best work for the analysis of the various elements and episodes of the story of Rāma.

'For the study of the story of the Ayodhyākāṇḍa vide Goyal, S.R., 'Succession Problem in the Vālmīkīya Rāmāyaṇa' Readings in History, ed. by K.S. Lal, pp. 49-79.

⁶Pusalker, A.D., 'Rāmāyana: Its History and Character', CHI, II, p. 17. 61bid., p. 23.

⁷We beg to disagree. The reference to the Bhārgavas are remarkably few in the Rāmāyaṇa. About Bhṛgu the only thing recorded is that his wife was decapitated by Vishṇu. Chyavana is mentioned only to narrate some stories and Paraśurāma to be worsened at the hands of Rāma Dāśarathi. Jamadgni is also mentioned only as a victim of Arjuna Kārtavīrya. Cf. Sukthankar, V S, Critical Studies in the Mahābhārata, p. 332.

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form it claims to deal with dharma, artha and kāma also (dharma-kamā-ratha samhitām).

Bhagvadgītā

Of all the religio-philosophical portions of the *Mbh*. the *Bhagvadgītā* (Song of the Lord), usually called the *Gītā*, is indubitably of the highest merit and the most popular. It is a part of the Bhishmaparvan of the *Mbh*. Lokmanya Tilak calls it 'a most luminous and priceless gem which makes us masters of spiritual wisdom'. Madan Mohan Malaviya saw in it a unique synthesis of 'the highest knowledge, the purest love and the most luminous action'. Mahatma Gandhi calls it 'the universal mother whose door is wide open to anyone who knocks'.

The Gītā has become in the last hundred and fifty years the subject of numerous editions, translations, commentaries and discussions. Now-a days more than 5,000 Sanskrit manuscripts of the Gītā are available, 314 being in the Sarasvati Bhavan Library of Banaras alone.² For a long time it was handed down orally. The oldest commentary now available is that of Śańkara, but it hints at the existence of five or six older commentaries which he intended to criticise. They were probably jñānakarmasamuchchayavādin in approach.³ After Śańkara hundreds of bhāshyas and tīkās on the Gītā were written by the exponents of the various philosophical schools—monists, dualists, qualified monists, pure monists etc., to draw confirmation of their own views from it. Among the more famous bhāshyas of post-Sańkara period are those of Rāmānuja, Madhusūdana Sarasvatī and Śrīdhara.⁴ Callewaert and Shilanand

¹According to A.C. Banquet, O Malley, C.F. Andrews and Agehananda Bharati the Gītā was largely forgotten and acquired significance in modern times when it was projected as an important text by the leaders of the Hindu renaissance. But it attracted the attention of these leaders because it was a popular work and suited their ideological orientation (cf. Arvind Sharma, 'On the Significance of the Bhagvadgītā' in Studles in Religion and Change, 1983, ed. by Madhu Sen, p. 58).

²Callewaert, W.N., and Shilananda, Hemraj, Bhogavadgītānuvāda: A Study in Transcultural Translation, Ranchi, 1983, p. 26.

³Ibid., p. 88 f.

⁴Sarkar, M.N., 'The Bhagavad-gītā: Its Early Commentaries', CHI, II, pp. 195-203. A.C. Banquet believed that the Gītā acquired significance because Śańkara wrote a commentary on it. But Śańkara wrote a commentary on it because it was an important text, the Smṛti Prasthāna of the Vedānta (see below).

enumerate 249 Sanskrit tīkās at one place. Apart from these, several works giving synopses of the *Bhagavadgītā* and describing its glory (*Gītā māhātmya*) are also found. Jñānadeva's *Bhāvarthadīpikā* in 9,000 stanzas was the first vernacular commentary.

The Gītā was imitated by numerous later Sanskrit authors. Scholars have noticed a large number of tracts of varying lengths composed in verse form to which the title 'Gītā' is given. Sixteen of them are contained in the Mahābhārata itself (the most famous of them being the Anugītā), twenty are found in the various Purāṇas and similar works (the most famous of them being the Sūrya/Gītā, Rāma Gītā, Devī Gītā and Gaṇeśa Gītā) and four exist as independent works.³

In the Mughal age the *Bhagvadgītā* was translated into Persian. Now it is found translated into 75 major languages of the world. Warren Hastings wrote the Preface of the first English translation of $G\bar{\imath}\iota\bar{a}$ rendered by Wilkins in which he prophesied that the $G\bar{\imath}\iota\bar{a}$ would last "when the British dominion in India shall long have ceased to exist".

In the last hundred and fifty years a large number of Indians (e.g. K.T. Telang, B.G. Tilak, Aurobindo Ghosh, S.K. Belvalkar, S. Radhakrishnan, V.S. Agrawala, D.D. Vadekar, V.G. Rele, S.K. De, T.M.P. Mahadevan, D.S. Sharma, S.C. Roy, etc.) as well as foreign scholars (e.g. Otto Schrader, Hopkins, R. Otto, R. Garbe, Edgerton, Hill, A.W. Ryder, E.J. Thomas, J. Charpentier, Kirfel, etc.) have done tremendous work in the field of text-history and translations of and commentary-writing and discussion on the Gītā. For a detailed history of the Gītā studies readers are advised to consult the resume given by A.D. Pusalker.⁵

Problems Connected with the Gītā

The Gītā is a part of the Bhīshmaparvan of the Mbh. and, as we have seen, the Mbh. took more than one thousand years in

¹Op. cit., pp. 98-100.

Aiyar, B.L. Parameswar, 'Imitations of the Bhagavadgītā and Later Gītā Literature', in CHI, II, pp. 204-222.

³Ibid.

^{&#}x27;Sharma, Arvind, 'On the Significance of the Bhagavadgītā' in Studies in Religion and Change', 1983, ed. by Madhu Sen, pp. 56-72.

⁵Pusalker, A.D., Studies in the Epics and Puranas, pp. 144-175. Cf. also the work of Callewaert the Shilanand mentioned above.

acquiring the present form of $Satas\bar{a}hasr\bar{i}$ samhit \bar{a} . Therefore it is not at all easy to determine the date of the $G\bar{i}t\bar{a}$. For the sake of easy discussion and clarity we may divide the entire issue into three parts: (a) Is the $G\bar{i}t\bar{a}$ a genuine part of the Mbh.? (b) Has it undergone any additions and alterations at different times? and (c) What dates can we assign to its present form and its earlier versions, if any?

Place of Gītā in the Mbh.

The genuineness of the Gītā as a portion of the Mbh. is doubted by some such as Talboys Wheeler1 mainly on the ground that it appears incongruous and irrelevant to enter into a long moral and spiritual dialogue at the commencement of the war (pravitte śastrasampāte). But, firstly, this objection assumes that the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ was composed in the battle-field of the Bharata war itself, which is nobody's contention. It is like assuming that all the dialogues of the Mbh. are the same which its characters actually spoke. Secondly, there are references to the Gītā in the Mbh. itself which clearly indicate that from the time of the composition of the Mbh. the Gītā has been a genuine constituent of it.2 Thirdly, after a detailed comparison of the Gītā and the Mbh., K.T. Telang and G.B. Tilak have shown that the two works have similar uses of ancient words and combinations (sandhis) which were not approved by Pāṇini.3 Fourthly, the Bhāgavata dharma of the other parts of the Mbh. and of the Gītā holds in common the views that worship of any god goes ultimately to Keśava or Vāsudeva, that the renunciation of the world is not desirable, that everyone should contribute to the revolving wheel of the world-order (samsāra chakra) by performing one's own duty (svadharma), that there are four kinds of devotees, etc.4 These facts very strongly suggest that the present Gītā has been a genuine part of the Mbh.

Now in view of the three stage evolution of the Mbh. discussed above the question arises to which form of the Epic—Jaya, Bhārata and Mahābhārata—does the Gītā belong? According to

¹Cf. Radhakrishnan, Ind. Phil., I, p. 523; CHI, II, p. 138 f.

²Upadhyaya, K.N., Early Buddhism and the Bhagavadgītā, p. 6 f.

³Ibid., p. 7.

⁴Ibid., p. 8.

Belvalkar, the editor of the critical edition of the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$, there are parts in the present Mbh. that presuppose and hence are later than the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$. Then there are stanzas, half stanzas and quarter stanzas from all parts of the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ which are found quoted everywhere in the Epic. Further, there are a few adaptations and abridgements of the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ found in the Epic, the chief of them being the $Anug\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$. Therefore, it must be concluded that the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ had become a part of the Epic long before the latter assumed its present $Satas\bar{a}hasr\bar{\imath}-samhit\bar{a}$ form. In this connection it is significant to note that the critical edition of the Mbh. mentioned above contains the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ also.

Theory of the Gradual Evolution of the Gītā

The second part of our investigation is whether or not the Gītā has undergone any additions and alteration? Many early scholars such as K.M. Ganguli believed that the Gītā has come down to us without interpolations.2 And it is true also that the Gītā, as it exists today, is found everywhere in the country almost in the same form; since the days of Sankara it is universally regarded as containing seven hundred verses—which is its present bulk also. The Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute of Poona prepared the critical text of the Gitā by collecting the readings from sixty manuscripts written in various Indian scripts. These and 160 other manuscripts which were available to the editiors reveal that the variants in the readings of the Gītā are quite minor both quantitatively and the qualitatively. Even the 14 additional verses and 4 half verses found in the Kashmirian recension discovered by Schradar have been proved to be insignificant by Belvalkar.3 Actually, as the Gitā acquired great sanctity quite early and came to be recited daily by countless Hindus, it did not remain easy for anybody to make interpolations in it.

But, despite the fact that the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is now found in the same form in which it was known to Sankara, many scholars believe that the present text of the $G\bar{\imath}\iota\bar{a}$ is not 'original'; that before the present $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ came into existence there existed a smaller $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ which

¹CHI, II, p. 136. f.

²Quoted by Callewaert and Shilanand, op. cit., p. 12.

³Cf. also Pusalker, op. cit., p. 144 ff; cf. Majumdar, B.B., Krşna in History and Legend, Calcutta, 1965, p. 36.

was elaborated into the present 'composite' work. The present Gītā, according to these scholars, does not contain a consistent philosophical or religious argument and shows clear traces of being remodelled at different times. According to Hopkins1 it is a Kṛshṇaite version of an older Vishnuite text and that in turn was at first an unsectarian work, perhaps a late Upanishad. Holtzmann believed that the present Gitā is a Vishnuite revision of a pantheistic poem.2 Garbe thought that the original Gita was written as a theistic tract based on the Sāmkhya-Yoga, though later on it was adapted by the upholders of the Upanishadic monism.3 Rudolf Otto followed his teacher Garbe and dissected from the Gītā what he considered as inserted by people later on 'with the view of securing for it the authenticity of Krshna's Divine form'.4 Winternitz also once accepted Garbe's theory. However in the English version of his History of Indian Literature he abandoned it, though he was still inclined to dissect the Gītā to discover its original form.5 Many other scholars including K.T. Telang and Edgerton subscribe to the progressive evolution theory.

But the theory that the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ presents a philosophy which was the result of gradual growth is contrary to the Indian thinking. As pointed out by Belvalkar the theory of gradual growth was particularly welcome to those who believed in the theory of Christian impact on Bhāgavatism because it gave them scope to believe that the influence of the Bible was felt atleast in the second stage of the evolution of the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$. As regards the 'reconstruction' of the hypothetical original $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ by Otto and others, Belvalkar etc. have shown that such attempts are too subjective to be given any serious consideration. In opposition to the theory that the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ presents a compilation of various views, which is sought to be made dignified by the appelation 'critical' and 'scholarly', Belvalkar, alongwith Dahlmann, Tilak, Poussin etc., feels that the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is not only a poem with a unitary teaching but presents a deliberate and well-formulated philosophical synthesis of originally divergent

¹Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 381.

²Quoted by Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 12.

³Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁶HIL, I, p. 436.

⁶CHI, II, p. 138.

⁷Ibid., p. 138 ff.; Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures, pp. 89-105.

views, synthesized into an organic whole by some master-thinker in order to meet his contemporary social and religious situation.1

Actually most Indian scholars do not subscribe to the evolution theory. They point out that the inconsistencies in the Gītā are more apparent than real. Any one with an insight into the nature of early Indian texts can at once see that Sāmkhya, Yoga, Vedānta. etc., in the senses they occur in the Gītā are not as mutually incompatible as they appear to be in the light of the subsequently developed philosophical systems of those names. As pointed out by Deussen, like the Upanishads in the Gītā we have unarranged and non-systematised ideas without any attempt at scientific definition and classification which we find in the later systematic works. Therefore it is better to assume that the present $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is the original Gītā though in view of the apparent evolution of the Mbh. of which Gītā is a part it may be admitted that some interpolations might have taken place in this poem as well.2 But these could not have been so substantial and radical in nature as scholars like Telang, Garbe, Otto, etc. ask us to believe.

Date of the Gita

The problem of the date of the Gītā has been rendered difficult mainly because of those scholars who have tried to determine the chronology of its various layers postulated by them. Talboys Wheeler regards it evidently a product of a Brahmanical age and presumably also a later age.3 According to Garbe the original Gītā belongs to 200 B.C. and its present form to 200 A.D.4 K.T. Telang believed that the latest date at which the Gītā can have been composed 'must be earlier than the 3rd century B.C., though it is altogether impossible to say at present how much earlier'. Douglas P. Hill thought that the internal evidence points to the second century B.C., as the period when the Gitā in its present from appeared'6 R.G. Bhandarkar opined that Gītā is at least as old as the fourth century B.C.7 B.G. Tilak tried to establish that the Gītā must

¹CHI, II, p. 153.

²Belvalkar, Gopal Basu Mallik Letures, p. 93.

³History of India, I, p. 288. Quoted by Upadhyaya, p. 1.

^{&#}x27;Quoted by Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 1.

⁵SBE, VIII, pp. 21 and 34.

⁶The Original Gītā, p. 14.

⁷ Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religions Systems, p. 13.

have been in existence in its present form at least in 500 B.C.¹ According to Radhakrishnan also it may be assigned to the 5th century B.C.² though the text may have received many alterations in subsequent times.

We feel that in the discussion on the date of the present Gītā the following facts deserve special consideration:

(1) The Gītā was composed in the atmosphere of the later Upanishads. It uses their language, discusses the same problems and even calls itself an Upanishad (Bhagavadgītāsū Upanishatsu). Its nearness with Isa and Chhandogya Upanishads is quite remarkable (infra). (2) It knows Sāmkhya and Yoga, but not in their classical form. (3) It knows Bhagavatism and is regarded as a basic work of this religion; it also discusses the doctrine of bhakti quite explicitly which the Upanishads do not do. But it is unaware of the doctrines of the Vyūhas and the Panchavīras. (4) It does not refer to the Buddha or Buddhism though uses the term Brahma-nirvāṇa. However, according to Belvalkar here the term nirvāņa has been used in the technical sense of the pre-Buddhist 'Kāla' philosophy.3 (5) Baudhāyana in his Grhyasūtra (II. 22.9) clearly considers the Gītā as an authority. for not only he quotes Gītā 1X.26 but also uses an honorific reference to it: 'So the Lord has said' (Tadāha Bhagavān). (6) Several references to the Gītā are found in the 'Brahmasūtra under the name 'Smrti'. Śankara, Rāmānuja, Madhava etc. agree in most of the cases that by the term 'Smrti' the author of the Brahmasūtra refers to the Gītā. But the value of this evidence is marred by the fact that the Gītā itself refers to the Brahmasūtra in its verse XIII.4. This mutual reference could have been caused by later additions in either or both the works. It has also been suggested that presumably the Gītā as welll as the Brahmsūtra are the works of the same author.4 This view is in keeping with the tradition also, which ascribes both of them to Vyasa. In this connection mention is also made of the Bhikshusūtra of Pārāśarya referred to by Pānini. According to some, we know of no other Pārāśarya (son of Parāśara) than Vyāsa an no other Sūtra work than the Brahmasūtra composed by him. It has also been suggested that the Brahmasūtra quoted by the Gītā

¹Gītā Rahasya, App., p. 270.

Ind. Phil., I, p. 524.

^aCHI, II, p. 156, n. 83.

Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 26 ff.

was a text of pre-Bādarāyaṇa period, for several works of this name must have been in existence by the time the Gītā was composed.¹ Which one of these suggestions is correct it is difficult to say, but taking all these facts into consideration it may be regarded as not very much wide of mark to assume that the Gītā and the Brahma sūtra both were composed some time between 500 and 400 B.C. when Buddhism had begun to emerge as a powerful movement, the age of the Upanishads was towards its close, the Sūtra works were being composed, and Bhāgavatism and Sāṁkhya and Yoga had not accquired their classical form. As regards their relative chronology is really difficult to say which of these two works is earlier, but in view of the facts noted above it is just possible that the Gūtā was composed earlier than the Brahmasūtra.

Sources of the Gītā: Gītā's Relation with the Vedas

In the pre-Buddhist age the Vedic speculation took, broadly speaking, three alternative lines: (i) the ritualistic line of orthodox tradition ($karma-m\bar{a}rga$); (ii) the radically anti-ritualistic line of knowledge ($j\bar{n}\bar{a}na\ m\bar{a}rga$); and (iii) a line compromising these two ($j\bar{n}\bar{a}nakarmasamuchchaya-m\bar{a}rga$). How much does the $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$ owe to the orthodox Vedic ritualistic tradition is problematical. The $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$ does not reject the authority of the Vedas, but at the

¹The context of the Gitā verse (XIII.4) where the references to the Brahmasūtra occurs, makes it quite clear that in the second half of that stanza the word rshibhih, 'by sages', has to be supplied. It means that here the Gītā is not alluding to any one specific Brahmasūtra (like the one which has come down to us), but to several such Sūtra works by more than one author. As pointed out by Belvalkar, as the different Vedic schools have their own separate Śrauta-, Grhyaand Dhorma-sūtras, there is no a priori reason why at least some of them should not have had their own distinct Brahmasūtras. The facts that the extant Brahmasūtra refers to the views of at least six predecessors of Bādarāyaņa and the Mahābhāshya of Patanjali states that Kāśakṛtsna wrote some treatise on Mīmāmsā (which must have covered the whole field of our extant Pūrva- and Uttara-Mīmāmsā sūtras) support it. The same is probably true of Asmarathya, Audulomi and Badari, judging from the contexts in which these names are referred to in both the Jaiminisūtra and the Vedāntasūtra. And if some texts under the name of Brahmasūtra existed before Bādarāyaņa, there remains no necessity to place the Gītā after Bādarāyana simply because it mentions the Brahmasūtia by name (cf. Belvalkar, S.K., Shree Gopal Basu Malik Lectures on Vedānta Philosophy, p. 140). It may, however, be noted that this argument merely opens up the possibility that the Brahmasūtra mentioned by the Gītā might have been the work of pre-Bādarāyana period; it does not prove the point conclusively.

same time does not accept Vedic ritualism as means of salvation. According to the $G\bar{\imath}i\bar{a}$, Moksha can be attained by the knowledge of \bar{a} tman, not by the performance of the yaj \bar{n} as. The exalted character of the Vedic gods is also not accepted. Some scholars have argued that it owes its treatment of $yaj\bar{n}a$ to RV itself. Sometimes RV 117.6 is quoted by the writers on the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ while expounding the doctrine of $yaj\bar{n}a$ rtha karman (karman for the sake of $yaj\bar{n}a$). Likewise the \bar{R} bhus of the RV who attained divine status through karman are said to have been the prototype of the karmayogins of the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$. One writer has even gone to the extent of finding the embryo of the whole structure of the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ in the RV (VI.9).

The Gītā's reaction to the Vedic heritage is one of progressive assumption and integration of yajña into an entirely new worldview and new ethics.3 Its Chapter IV gives the name of yajña to ascetic exercises, yaugika exercises and even to concentration and knowledge. Ch. XVII classifies vaiña according to pre-ponderance in it of sattva, rajas and tamas. And finally the devotee is called upon to do all he does in the spirit of worship to Kṛshṇa, for Krshna is indeed Brahman and Brahman is identical with yajña.4 In Gītā II. 42-43 it is said that those who are devoted to the letter of the Vedas and look upon heaven as the supreme goal are unwise. They merely utter flowery speech (pushpitā vācham) recommending many acts of various kinds for the attainment of pleasure and prosperity with rebirth as their fruit. Gītā's attitude to the Vedic karmakānda becomes explicit by II.46 which, according to the translation of Tilak, states: "A person having the most perfect knowledge of Brahman has as much necessity for all the Vedas (i.e. the Vedic Kāmya Karmans) as (people have) for a well when all around there is (natural) water that has rushed in (to them)". This verse clearly establishes the uselessness of the Vedic kāmyakarmans for those who practise nishkāma karman.5

¹Singh, S.P., 'Embryo of the Bhagavadgītā in the Rgveda', *Bhāratī*, 5, Pt. 1, p. 86.

²*Ibid.*, pp. 86-90.

³Jordens, J.T.F., 'Yajña in the *Bhagavadgītā*', Asian Studies, Philippines, III, No. 2, 1965 (Quoted in PJ, IV, 2), pp. 283-92.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Hazra, R.C., 'The Interpretation of a Verse of Bhagavadgītā', ABORI, 1955, p. 141-9.

Gītā and the Upanishads

"The debt of the Gītā to the Upanisads is as clear as its originality. The Chandogva tells us that Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra was instructed by Ghora Angirasa and the identification of this Kṛṣṇa with the Kṛṣṇa of the Gītā is natural and uncontradicted by any serious evidence. The echoes of the Isa and Katha are similarly plaind in the Gītā".1 There cannot be two opinions therefore about it that the Gītā is the epitome of the Upanishads. According to an ancient verse, it is the immortalizing milk (dugdham Gītāmṛtam mahat) of the Upanishadic cows (sarvopanishado gāvo) milked by Kṛshṇa (dogdhā Gopālanandanaḥ for the sake of Arjuna, the calf (Pārtho vatsah sudhirbhoktā). As pointed out by K.N. Upadhyaya the concept of the eternity and immoratality of Atman, the absoluteness and transcendence of Brahman, its negative and paradoxical characterisation, the references to the supreme nature of God (Patamātman), the symbolic meditation of 'Om' (Śabda-Brahman), the description of the two pathways of Pitryana and Devayana, the theory of the ultimate unity behind the multiplicity of the world, an abiding and imperishable element behind the impermanent and perishing features of it, the nature and the state of Brahma nirvāņa and the ideal conduct of sthita-prajña-in short, most of the metaphysical elements of the Gītā are drawn from the Upanishads. Many of the verses of the Gītā literally or with some variations, are taken from the Upanishads. Besides, there are numerous short passages, words and expressions which clearly seem to have been borrowed from them.2 Many of the Gītā imageries also are quite similar to those of the Upanishads. Some of the stray ideas of the Upanishads are brought into focus and propounded promi-This may be illustrated by nently in the Gītā for the first time. referring to its distinctive doctrines of devotion (bhakti) and disinterested action (nishkāma karman). But for the Śvetāśvatara, which Barth describes as a kind of Saivite Bhagavadgītā, no other Upanishad has that pronounced tone of bhakti as is found in the Similarly, the doctrine of nishkāma karman, though hinted at here and there in the Upanishads was nowhere given that

¹Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision and Symbolic Forms in Ancient India, 1984, p. 125.

²Upadhyaya, K.N., op. cit., p. 109. Upadhyaya has given a detailed list of such similar passages and ideas (pp. 110-14).

prominence which is given to it in the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$. Therefore, the above quoted verse describing the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ as the milk of the Upanishadic cows should be taken only in a very general sense.

Elements of Sāmkhya-Yoga in the Gītā

In the $G\bar{u}\bar{a}$, the fundamental tenets of the Sāmknya system are combined with those of Vedānta and interwoven in its metaphysical scheme. The nature of Prakṛti and Purusha, their relation causing the world-process, the nature and function of the three guṇas, the twenty-four principles together with Purusha as the twenty-fifth, and the discriminative knowledge of Prakṛti and Purusha leading to emancipation—all are accepted and assimilated in the $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$. However as it admits absolute supremacy of the non-dual Brahman it does not regard Purusha and Prakṛti as two ultimate and independent entities, but considers them as only two forms, higher and lower, of the same Reality (VII.4.6).

The term 'yoga' is also not used in the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ in its strict technical sense. In the system of Patañjali yoga is defined as 'the restraint of the mental operations' (chitta-vṛtti-nirodha), but in the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ it is loosely used in many senses—in the sanse of the disinterested or selfless discharge of one's duty, in the sense of 'complete self-surrender' to god which pre supposes a similar disinterested discharge of action in the name of God, in the sense of wondrous powers (Yogamāyā) of God, and in its technical sense of controlling the mental operations and practising concentration, as found in the Pātañjala yoga philosophy. It may also be remembered that as the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is mostly found dominated by the Vedāntic ideas, it always seems anxious to subordinate the atheistic and dualistic ideas of Sāmkhya along with the method of Yoga under the theistic and non-dualistic philosophy of Vedānta.

Gītā and Buddhism

The question of the Buddhist influence on the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is not so easy to decide. Indian scholars like K.T. Telang, R.G. Bhandarkar, B.G. Tilak, R.D. Ranade, S. Radhakrishnan, etc. are not inclined to see any Buddhist influence on the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$. Garbe remarks

¹Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 116. ²Ibid., p. 117.

that "Buddhist influence might be regarded as very much doubtful, resting at most on very far-fetched reasons". According to Radhakrishnan the Gītā does not show any borrowing from Buddhism. Senart was of the opinion that Buddhism itself was influenced by the doctrine of devotion to Vishņu-Kṛshṇa. Comparing the two religions, he says that 'the affinities are undeniable' and 'Buddhism is undoubtedly the borrower'. According to K.N. Upadhyaya, however, there are some pointed statements made in the Gītā, which seem to counter those of the Nikāyas. The term 'nirvāṇa' used five times in the Gītā may also be taken as indication of Buddhistic influence on it.² But as noted above other scholars do not agree with this view.

Purāṇas: Chronology, Authorship, Classification, etc.

The species of Indian literature known as Purāna, from which 'Paurāņika' religion derives its name, reaches back to great antiquity. It is mentioned, mostly in conection with Itihasa, in such early works as the Atharvaveda, Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, Gopatha Brāhmaṇa, Upanishad Brāhmaṇa, Brhadāranyaka Chhāndogya Upanishad, Taittirīya Āranyaka, Śankhāyana Śraūtasūtra and Gautama Dharmasūtra. According to the Atharvaveda and the Brhadaranyaka Upa. the 'Purāṇa' had as much a sacred origin as the Vedas. According to the Chhāndogya Upa. Itihāsa-Purāṇa is fifth in point of importance besides the four Vedas (Itihāsapurāṇaḥ pañchamo Vedānām). The Mbh. propounds the dictum that the meaning of the Vedas should be elaborated in the light of the Itihāsa and the Purāņa. Itihāsa purāņābhyām Vedam samupabrmhavet.3 This traditionally sacred character has been retained by the Purana literature even to the present day though it never attained the position of 'Sruti', being always recognised as Smrti.4

The Purāṇas themselves state their number to be eighteen.5

¹IHQ, VI, p. 672.

²Upadhyaya, op. clt., p. 128 ff; Cf.; Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'Some Religious Concepts Common to the Upanişads, the Bhagvadgītā and Jainism', Bhāratīyā Vidyā, XXIV, Nos. 1-4, 1964, pp. 32-40.

³Cf. Bhattacharya, S., 'An Exposition of the Vedas', *Bhāratī*, Varanasi, No. 7, Pt. I and II, pp. 58-63 for an interpretation of this dictum.

⁴Hazra, R.C., Puranic Records of Hindu Rites and Customs, p. 1 f.

⁵According to another tradition there were twenty-six Purānas (shadvimšatt Purānānām). The eighteen Purānas are supposed to contain 4 lakh (Chatur-laksha) verses.

The Padma P. classifies them into three groups: the Vishņu, Nārada, Bhāgavata, Garuḍa, Padma and Varāha are Vishņuite sāttvika Purāṇas and as such lead to salvation; the Brahmāṇḍa, Brahmavaivarta, Mārkaṇḍeya, Bhavishya, Vāmana, and Brahma are the rājasa texts devoted to Brahmā and secure only heaven for their readers; and the Matsya, Kūrma, Linga, Śiva, Skanda and Agni are Śaivite tāmasa texts. Surprisingly these are regarded as leading to hell.

According to P.V. Kane the Purāṇas may be classified into four categories viz. (1) encyclopaedic like Agni, Garuḍa, etc. (ii) those dealing mainly with tīrthas such as Padma and Nāradīya, (iii) sectarian such as Linga, Vāmana, etc. and (iv) historical, such as Vāyu and Brahmāṇḍa, etc.¹

There has developed a large mass of literature on the various aspects of the Purānic studies. A.D. Pusalker an P.V. Kane² have given a detailed resume of the important contributions made by foreign and Indian savants.

The Purāṇas are generally ascribed to Vyāsa (ashṭādaśa purāṇāni kṛtvā Satyavatīsutaḥ), but other traditions are also found in the Purāṇas themselves.³ According to Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Vishṇu Vyāsa entrusted the Purāṇa saṁhitā to Sūta whose three disciples Kāśyapa, Sāvarṇi and Vaṁśapāyana prepared three new Purāṇa saṁhitās. All these four Saṁhitās had four thousand verses each. The personality of Sūta is somewhat an enigma in the Purāṇas and the Mbh. The word sūta means 'charioteer' and also 'a person of mixed pratiloma caste born of the union of Brāhmaṇa female with a Kshatriya male'. The later authors of the Purāṇas obviously could not believe that the great sages like Śaunaka learnt the Purāṇas from a person of low caste. They therefore invented the story of his divine character which, according to Kane, we need not believe.⁴

¹Kane, op. cit., HD, V, ii, p. 842.

²Pusalker, A.D., Studies in the Epics and Puranas, p. 197 ff.; Kane, P.V., op. cit., V, Pt. ii, p. 843 f., 883.

³According to Vishņu P. Parāśara obtained the boon of becoming the author of the Purāṇa (Purāṇasmhitākartā). According to the Devībhāgavata the Saura Pūrāṇa was said by Parāśara (Parāśaraproktam). According to another tradition the Mārkaṇḍeya and the Varāha Purāṇas were composed by Mārkaṇḍeya, the Agni Purāṇa by Angirā, the Linga and Brahmāṇḍa by Taṇḍin and the Bhavishya by Mahādeva.

^{&#}x27;Kane, HD, V. Pt. ii, p. 864.

Anyway, the original authors of the Purānas, like those of the Epics, were the Sūta or bards, Sūtas Lomaharshana or his son Ugraśravas (the Sauti) being their idealized representative. Later on, however, the Purānas fell into the hands of ordinary temple-priests who were not well educated. They added to the Purānas a great deal of new material which served their own ends.

The theory of the existence of one original Purana samhita has been supported by A.M.T. Jackson, A. Blau and F.E. Pargiter.¹ Pargiter further believed that the original Samhita was the creation of the Kshatriya tradition while the Vedas were the product of the priestly Brāhmana class. Probably the tradition that there are 12,000 verses in the Purāņa (dvādašaiva sahasrāņi) indicates its volume. But in the absence of the supposed original Purāna Samhitā such speculations cannot be evaluated.2 On the other hand, it is quite obvious that more Puranas than one had come into existence long before the birth of Christ. In the Samhitas of Manu and Yajñavalkya and in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, the word 'purāṇa' has been used in plural. The Mbh. speaks of a 'Purāṇa' proclaimed by Vāyu while the Āpastamba Dharmasūtra quotes a passage from a 'Bhavishyat Purāṇa'. As the term purāṇa means 'old narrative' the contradiction in title 'Bhavishyat Purāṇa is obvious and indicates that in Apastamba's time "the term 'Purāṇa' had become. . . . merely the designation of a particular class of books. It would have required the existence of a number of books called Puranas to produce that change, and manifestly they must have had their own special names to distinguish from one another, and so convert their common title Purāņa into a class designation".3 However, it does not mean that all the eighteen Mahāpurāṇas had come into being in such an early period. It is true that the eighteen Puranas are mentioned in the Svargārohaņa parvan of the Mbh. and in the Harivamsa, but both these texts in their final form cannot be placed with confidence. earlier than 400 A.D. Actually none of the Puranas may be assigned to the pre-Gupta age in its present form.

A very old definition of Purāņa, contained in the Amarakośa and in most of extant Purāņas says that a Purāņa is to have five

¹CHI, II, p. 244.

^{*}Kane rejects the theory of the existence of one original Purāṇa (HD, V, ii, p. 829).

Pargiter, AIHT, p. 50 f.

characteristics (lakshanas): (1) creation (Sarga), (2) re-creation (Pratisarga), (3) genealogy of gods and sages (Vamsa), (4) cosmic cycles (Manvantara), and (5) accounts of royal dynasties (Vamsānucharita). All these characteristics had their roots in the ākhyānas (tales), upākhvānas (anecdotes), gāthās (songs) and kalpoktis (lore that had come down through ages), which were used, according to the Brahmanda, Vayu and Vishnu, by Vyasa in compiling the original Purāṇa.1 However, in most of the extant Purāṇas these five lakshanas are neglected partially or totally and great importance has been given to religious and social topics. Even in the Puranas, which deal with five topics, there are chapter on social customs and institutions-Varņāśramadharma, āchāra, śrāddha, prayaśchitta, dāna, pūjā, vrata, tīrthas, pūrtadharma, pratishthā, dīkshā, utsarga, etc. and on the glories of various deities. "Thus the present Puranas have practically turned into Smṛti-codes".2 As a result of this transformation people of the later ages thought that the above-mentioned five characteristics were meant for the Upapurāņas whereas the Mahāpurāņas were to have not less than ten characteristics (daśabhirlakshaṇairyuktam) relating to cosmogony, religion and society. Consequently, on the one hand, the genealogies of kings and sages were little cared for, and on the other, sections on glories of deities holy places and such other topics composed by different authors at different times were freely incorporated. Some Puranas were even converted into encyclopaedic works by incorporating chapters not only on religious and social matters but also on law, politics, poetics, grammar, medicine, music, dancing and sculpture. According to Hazra "there were two main stages in the devnlopment of the Purānic Smṛti materials. In the first stage, which covered a period ranging approximately from the beginning of the third to the end of the fifth century A.D., the Purāṇas dealt only with those topics on Hindu rites and customs which formed the subject matter of the early Smṛti such as those of Manu and Yājñavalkya. But in the second stage, which began from about the beginning of the sixth century

¹Hazra, op. cit., p. 4; Dandekar, R.N., in CHI, II. p. 242. Hazra also believes ('The Aśvamedha, the Common Source of Origin of the Purāṇa Pañcha-Lakṣaṇa and the Mahābhārata', ABORI, XXXVI, 1955, pp. 190-203) that the Purāṇa Pañchalakshaṇas and the Mbh. both owe then origin to the Aśvamedha sacrifice, and especially to its Pariplāva Akhyānas.

²Hazra, op. cit., p. 5.

Mārkandeva Purāna

A.D.... the new topics added relate mainly to various kinds of gifts, initiation, sacrifices to the planets and their pacification, Homa, consecration (pratishthā) of images etc., Saṁdhyā, glorification of Brāhmans and their worship, glorification of holy places, Tithis, Utsarga, Vrata and Pūjā. These topics are found neither in the works of Manu Yāj. nor in the Purāṇas, or portions thereof, which were written earlier than about the beginning of the sixth century A.D."

The earliest and latest probable dates for such additions of the Smṛti materials to some of the important Purāṇas according to Hazra's theory are as follows:

1.	Μαικαφούμε ταταμα	may be much later).
2.	Brahmāṇḍa and	
3.	Vāyu Purāņas	3rd to 5th cent. A.D.
4.	Vishņu Purāņa	3rd to 4th cent. A.D.
5.	Bhāgavata Purāņa	6th cent. A.D.

3rd to 5th cent. A D (some portions

6. Matsya Purāṇa 6th to 7th cent. A.D. (some portions may be as late as A.D. 1000 or even later).²

A few chapters dealing with topics such as holy places, Varṇā-śramadharma, yugadharma, strī-dharma, glorification of the Brāhmaṇas, worship of Śālagrama, Tulasī, planets and Devī, and merit of digging tanks, dedicating trees, gardens and reservoirs, etc., were interpolated in the Vāyu, Matsya, Padma, Brahma, Brahmavaivarta, Skanda and Garuda Purāṇas in the post-1000 A.D. period.

P.V. Kane has divided the chronology of the composition of the Purāṇas into five stages. In the first stage we find references to the Purāṇa in the Atharvaveda, the Śatapatha and the ancient Upanishads. About the contents of this Purāṇa we know nothing. In the second stage there definitely existed at least three Purāṇas. The Taittirīya Āraṇyaka refers to Purāṇānī while the Āpastamba Dharma sūtra quotes four verses from a Purāṇa and expressly

¹*Ibid.*, p. 188-89.

²CA, p. 298.

mentions the Bhavishyat Purāṇa. It shows that in the 5th-4th century B.C. there existed at least three Purāṇas including a Bhavishyat and that they contained sarga, pratisarga and some Smṛṭi material. In the third stage, belonging to the period before the second-third centuries, A.D., several Purāṇas quoted in the Mbh. and Smṛṭi texts were composed. The Matsya was composed or more probably revised about the close of the third century A.D. while the Vayu, and Brahmāṇḍa were revised between 320—325 A.D. since they refer to the Guptas but do not refer to any Gupta king. Most of the Mahāpurāṇas were composed from 5th-6th century A.D. to the 9th century A.D., which is the fourth stage of the evolution of the Purāṇas. The Upapurāṇas were composed from about 7th-8th century to the 13th century or even later which was the last stage of the evolution of the Purāṇa literature.

Purānas and Upapurānas as a Source of Religious History
From the religious point of view the present Purānas are more
or less sectarian, carrying on propaganda in favour of a particular
deity or a place sacred to that deity. Their main religious material
may briefly be indicated thus:²

The Brahma P. is devoted to the glorification of sacred places, and a large section of it deals with the Krshna legends. At the end of it there are a few chapters dealing with the śrādhas, the duties of the castes, āśramas, and the rewards of Vishņu bhakti. The Padma P. in its last book gives an account of the incarnations of Vishnu. Some of the books of its longer version contain chapters on the glory of the cults of Ganesa and Siva. The Vishnu P., as is obvious from its name, describes Vishnu as the highest being and the sole creator and preserver of the world. Among the narratives and myths contained in it mention may be made of the legends of samudra manthana (churning of the ocean) and of Dhruva and Prahlada. Its fifth book describes the glory of divine Krshna and his marvellous adventures. The Vāyu P. contains legends in glorification of Siva. Hence its second name Siva P. The Narada P., on the other hand, propagates the Vishnu cult and is a purely sectarian text.

¹HD, V, ii, pp. 853-5.

²CA, p. 292 ff. For P.V. Kane's notes on individual Purānas see his HD, V, pp. 292-4; Pt. II, p. 887 ff.; cf. also Dandekar, CHI, II, p. 253 ff.

The *Bhāgavata P*. is a very late work. Doubts have been expressed as regards its genuineness and some scholars have ascribed it to the grammarian Vopadeva. It contains twelve books of which the tenth, devoted to the life of Kṛshṇa, is highly popular. Kapila, the founder of the Sāmkhya system, and the Buddha appear as incarnations of Vishṇu in it.

The Mārkandeya P. is one of the oldest Purāṇas. In some of its sections instead of Vishņu and Siva Vedic deities like Indra, Agni, and Sūrya receive attention. Its section called Durgā Sapta-sati or Devī Māhātmya is highly popular and extremely important for the study of the Śākta cult.

The Agni P. is a Saivite work dealing with the cults of Linga, Durgā and Gaņeśa. It is encyclopaedic in character. The Bhavishya P. describes the Brāhmanical rites, duties of castes, and so on. The solar priests Bhojakas and Magas are Mentioned in it in connection with the worship of Sūrya. The Linga and the Varāha Purāṇas were probably composed quite late. The former was apparently influenced by Tāntrikism. It teaches the worship of Siva, especially in the linga form. The latter is intended to be a manual for Vishnu worshippers, though it contains legends of Siva, Durgā and Gaņeśa also.

The ancient Skanda P. is probably entirely lost to us. What remains of it is only the name to which extensive works, said to be Samhitās or Khandas of the original Purāna, and numerous Māhātmyas claim allegiance. The Vāmana P. can also hardly be accepted as the original work bearing that name. A considerable portion of it is devoted to linga worship. There are also many legends in it about Siva Umā, Gaņeśa and Kārttikeya. In the Kūrma P. Vishņu, in the form of a tortoise (kūrma), narrates the Purāna to King Indradyumna.

The Matsya P. is written in the form of a samvāda between the fish (matsya) and Manu whom the former saves at the time of the great flood. It describes various festivals, rites and glory of sacred places. In the Garuḍa P. emphasis is laid on the various forms of Vishņu worship. Like the Agni P., this texts is also encyclopaedic in form. The Brahmāṇḍa P. contains only glorification of places and hymns of praise. The Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa is considered to be a part of this Purāṇa. It teaches Vedāntic monism and devotion to Rāma as paths to salvation.

Beside these Purāṇas there are Upapurāṇas whose number is also stated to be eighteen (though their actual number is much larger, probably more than a hundred). They are more or less the product of local cults and different religious sects. Among the works belonging to this class may be mentioned the Vishṇudharmottara, a Vaishṇava work from Kashmir. The Brhaddharma Purāṇa mentions even Vālmīki and Vyāsa, besides Kapila and the Buddha, as incarnations of Vishṇu. The Kalki P. relates the deeds of Vishṇu at the close of the Kali age. Some of these Upapurāṇas are quite late, but not all of them.²

The importance of the Puranas for study of the devolopment of Hinduism can never be overrated In fact "they afford us far greater insight into all aspects and phases of Hinduism-its mythology, its idol-worship, its theism and pantheism, its love of God, its philosophy and its superstitions, its festivals and ceremonies, and its ethics, than any other works". According of Mehendale3 they "may be regarded as a deliberate attempt to bring the theistic religions like Vaishnavism and Saivism within the pale of orthodoxy by combining the new doctrines with a respect for Vedic rituals, customs, and beliefs, specially the orthodox ideas of caste and order (Varnāśrama). These had fallen into disuse or comparative neglect, partly on account of the rise of the new sectarian religions, which were all more or less anti-Vedic and anti-Brāhmaṇical in their inception, and partly on account of the large influx of foreign elements in the Hindu population in the wake of the successive invasions of the Greeks, Parthians, Sakas, Kushāṇas. Necessity was therefore felt of a new class of popular literature which would reconcile the moderate heterodox cults like Vaishnavism and Saivism to the old social customs and rituals as far as practicable. The Purāṇas4 were thus revised and modified

¹For a detailed study of the Upapurāṇas vide Hazra, R.C., in CHI, II, pp. 271. See also his Studies in the Upapurāṇas, I, pp. 1-400. Their lists preserved in different texts differ from each other. The Devi Bhāgavata claims to be a Mahāpurāṇa and relegates the Bhāgavata Purāṇa of the Vaishṇavas to the status of an Upapurāṇa. Some Purāṇas do not recognise Vāyu P. as a Mahāpurāṇa. The Kūrma P. says that the Upapurāṇas are the summaries of the Mahāpurāṇas while the Saura P., itself an Upapurāṇa, calls them Khilas or suppliments.

²CHI, II, p. 272.

³CA, p. 297 f.

That is, the ancient Puranas.

in order to serve as the religious texts of that large section of the people who, though devoted worshippers of Siva and Vishnu, were at the same time too much attached to Vedas and Smrtis or Dharmaśāstras, particularly the Varņāśrama, to abandon them altogether for the sake of the new creed. Thus a new class of sectarians arose who may be called Smarta-Saivas or Smarta Vaishnavas," the needs of whom were fulfilled by these texts.

Later (Paurāņika-Tāntrika) Upanishads

The later or post-Vedic Upanishads constitute an source for the study of epic-Paurānika religion.1 In the earlier period only ten Upanishads (Isa, Kena, Katha, Mundaka, Mandukya, Praśna, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chhāndogya and Brhadāranyaka) were recognised as important and were called Dasopanishad. A little later, three or four were added to the list of the important ones, namely, Śvetaśvotara, Kaushītaki, Maitrāyaņī and the Mahānārāyana, specially because they were quoted in the commentaries of and and were commented upon by the great āchāryas.2 The tradition of the composition of the Upanishads continued in later ages. For, when the form and style of 'Upanishad' established its reputation, it was natural for writers to adopt this name for their writings even if most of them did not deserve it. Thus we have references to 108, and 144 and 183, and 365, and 1008 Upanishads. In the Muktikopanishad Hanumāna is told by Rāma that if a person is desirous of bodily absorption in Brahman, he should study all the 108 Upanishads enumerated in this Upanishad. They are the following:

Īśā(vāsya), Kena, Kaṭha(vallī), Praśna, Mundaka, Māndūkya, Taittirīya, Aitareya, Chhāndogya, Brhadāranyaka, Brahma, Kaivalya, Jābāla, Śvetāśvatara, Hamsa, Ātuni, Garbha, Nārāyana, (Parama) hamsa, (Amrta) bindu, (Amrta)nāda, (Atharva)śiras, (Atharva)śikhā, Māitrāyaṇī, Kaushītaki, Bṛhajjābāla, (Nṛsimha)tāpanī, Kālāgnirudra, Maitreyī, Subāla, Kshuri(kā), Mantrikā, Sarvnsāra, (Śuka) rahasya), Vajrasūchikā, Tejo(bindu), Nāda(bindu), Dhyāna (bindu), (Brahma)vidyā, Yogatattva, Ātma(pra)bodha, (Nārada) parivarājaka, Trišikhī(brāhmaņa), Sītā, (Yoga)chūdā(maṇi), Nirvāṇa, Mandala (brāhmana), Dakshinā(mūrti), Śarabha, nārāyaņa (Tripādavibhūtimahānārāyaṇa), Advaya(tāraka), (Rāma)

¹As these works are generally neglected in the works on the epic-Paurāṇika religion, we are treating them in relatively greater detail.

²Cf. RHAI, I, p. 106 ff.

rahasya, Rāmatāpanī, Vāsudeva, Mudgala, Śāndilya, Paingala, Bhikshu, Mahat, Śārīraka, (Yoga)śikhā, Turīyātīta, Sannyāsa, (Paramahamsa) Parivrājaka, Akshamālikā, Avyakta (Vajra?), Ekākshara, (Anna)pūrnā, Sūrya, Akshi, Adhyātma, Kundikā, Sāvitrī, Ātma, Pāśupata, Parabrahma, Avadhūta, Tripurātapana, Devī, Tripurā, Kaṭha(rudra), Bhāvanā, Hṛdaya (Rudra ḥṛdaya) Jābālodarśana), (Yoga)kuṇḍali(nī), Bhasma(jābāla), Rudrāksha(jābāla), Gaṇa (pati), Darśana, Tārasāra, Mahāvākya, Pañchabrahma, (Prāṇ) āgnihotra, Gopālatapana, Kṛshṇa, Yājñavalkya, Varāha, Śāṭyāyanī, Hayagrīva, Dattātreya, Garuda, Kali (santaraņa), Jābāli, Saubhāgya (Saubhāgyalakshmī) (Sarasvatī)rahasya, (Bahv)ṛcha, and Muktikā.1 Among the 108 Upanishads, which are enumerated by Gajendragadkar (after omitting the names of ancient Upanishads) the following are included: Advaita, Ātmapūjā, Chakra, Guhyakāli, Kātyāyana, Mahāvākyavivaraņa, Maitreya, Nārāyaņa (No. 2), Nīlarudra, Piņda, Śiva, Śrīvidyāmnāya, Sumukhi, Svasamvedya, and Yogarāja. Gopālatapana, Ramatāpanī and Nṛsimhatāpanī are usually counted as two each—pūrva and uttara (for example Gopālapūrvatapana and Gopālottaratapana).2

The order in which these Upanishads are mentioned above is neither chronological nor logical. These is no authentic historical evidence to prove the first, while it is prima facie evident that they do not represent a logical development.3 Actually, we have no sufficient data to determine the chronological stratification of the post-Vedic Upanishads. Their period is obviously very vast, beginning from the time when the last of the old Upanishads was written and lasting till the advent of the British rule, for there is one Upanishad, called Akabaropanishad (or Allopanishad) and another, known as Christopanishad, obviously written respectively in the Mughal and post-Mughal periods. But one can easily make out the differences between the Upanishads of the Paurāņika-Tantrika age and the comparatively modern ones. The philosophy of the many of the New Upanishads is closely allied both in form and presentation with that of many of the old, so as to deservedly obtain the name of Upanishad, but a number of them are clearly later than the emergence of the six systems of philosophy. Occasion-

¹CHI, I, p. 346; Kalyāṇa, Upanishad aṅka, Gita Press, p. 624 f.
²Gajendragadkar, K.V., Neo-Upanishadic Philosophy, Bombay, 1959, p. 156. *Ibid., p. 16.

ally an Upanishad shows influence of a particular school of thought—the Svasamvedya Upa., for example, is purely a Mahāyānist text. It is also obvious that the various groups of the New Upanishads, such as the Vedāntic, the Yogic, the Saivite, the Vaishuavite, etc., were written respectively in periods when these different branches of speculation prevailed.

Contents of the Paurāņika-Tāntrika Upanishads

transitation Gajendragadkar the According to Upanishadic to the Neo-Upanishadic period may fitly be compared with the transition from the Platonic to the Neo-Platonic thought in Europe. Neo-Upanishadism like Neo-Platonism takes a predominant interest in practical ethics and mysticism.1 Usually they continue the argument of the old Upanishads. Brahman as the highest Reality forms the subject-matter of almost all the New Upanishads also. Purusha and Praktti and other categories of the Sāmkhyas appear prominently in many of them. told in the Sarīrakopanishad that Pradhana or Prakṛti consists of twenty-four elements, that the individual soul is Kshetrajña, while Purusha is greater than these and beyond these. In the Nirālambopanishad Purusha is defined as a sort of power of The Mantrikopanishad describes Praktti or creative power as assuming the form of a cow or she-goat and as being the cause of all change in the world. The relation of the individual self with the Supreme Self discussed by the New Upanishads is usually the same as that found in the Old Upanishad. Thus in the Copālottaratapana Upa., we are told that the two birds (individual self and the Supreme Self, cling to the same tree: one of them eats the sweet fruit, while the other looks on without eating it. In the Śukarahasya and the Mahāvākyavivaraņa Upanishads the mahāvākvas of the Old Upanishads regarding the relation of Brahman and Atman are discussed.

But the main problem before the New Upanishads is not how to begin philosophising, but how to give a practical turn to the early philosophical thought. Being the fusion of the fundamental thoughts of the Vedānta, Sāmkhya, Yoga and Bhakti systems, they are eclectic in their philosophisings. But sometimes they take a

few steps in advance over the thoughts of early Upanishads while some of their ideas are entirely new and original. In ethics greater stress is laid on practical ideals. Ascetic ideals in their modified form are recommended for the common people and the importance of mysticism, the science of self-realisation, is emphasized. More attention is paid to the problems of occult psychology. The rise of interest in the physiological sciences is much more in evidence, as we see from the Garbhopanishad, which is an original contribution to the theory of embryology. Finally, the simplification and popular presentation of the various philosophical problems as seen in the Sarvasāropanishad and the Maitreyyupanishad as well as the concretisation of abstract concepts for practical purposes and the exaltation of devotion to God in various forms as preached in the different Bhakti schools clearly show that at the time of the New Upanishads philosophy had become popular and an interesting subject of discussion.1

The gods of the New Upanishads may be classified into four main divisions—the Saivite gods, the Vaishnavite, gods, the goddesses and the minor gods. The Pauranika tenor of all these gods and goddesses is quite clear. The Sarabhopanishad praises Siva as Supreme God. Yājñavalkya, the philosopher of the Jābālopanishad recommends the worship of Rudra. In the Jābālyupanishad Šiva is described as Pasupati, in the Hamsopanishad as Sadāsiva and in the Bhasmajābāla Upa. as Mahādeva. The Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaņa Upa. gives details about Vishņu. In the Gopālottaratāpana Upa. we have an enumeration of four other forms of Vishnu, namely, Rāma, Kṛshṇa, Pradyumna, and Aniruddha. Both the Nṛsimhatāpini Upanishads are devoted to the description of Nṛsimha. Nārāyaṇa is described in the Nārāyāṇa Upa. as also in the Ātmaprabodhopanishad. Kṛshṇa is described in both the Gopālatapana Upanishads and the Krshnopanishad contains a metaphorical description of the god. We are told that Kṛshṇa is verily the eternal. Brahman, kindness being his mother Rohini, earth Satyabhama, and the thousands of Upanishads and Vedic verses, his wives. Brahmā is said to be the creator of the world, Vishnu the protector and Rudra the destroyer. Vishnu and Rudra are eulogised in many of these Upanishads, but Brahmā remains only the cosmic creative power never personified

¹Ibid., p. 15.

prominently. In the Sūryopanishad and the Gāṇapatyupanishad respectively Sūrya and Gaṇapati are eulogised. The description of different goddesses shows influence of Śāktism, which is also responsible for the introduction of Tāntrikism into these texts. In the Bahvrchopanishad a number of goddesses are mentioned, but it makes the Mahātripurasundarī the object of special praise. Sarasvatī is described in the Sarasvatīrahasyopanishad. Durgā is described in the Devi Upa. as living in the lotus within the heart, and as refulgent like the morning sun.

In the New Upanishads many attempts have been made for the reconciliation of the claims of the different Saiva and Vaishnava gods. According to Gajendragadkar this reconciliation seems to have been effected in four different ways. Firstly, they have adopted the old henotheistic approach in order to remind the devotee that any and every god may be regarded as the supreme one. Though the various sectarian Upanishads begin with a praise of the deity after whom they are named, they end with an identification of their deity with all the heavenly gods, with the Highest God, with the Self, and, in fact, with Brahman. The second way of reconciliation is a deliberate identification of Siva and Vishnu. In the Skandopanishad we are told that Siva constitutes the heart of Vishnu while Vishnu constitutes the heart of Siva. The third method of reconciliation seems to be by what might be called a higher pantheism. Thus in the Maitreyyupanishad, we are told that the body is to be regarded as a temple in which the Highest God is to be worshipped with the conviction that the Individual Self is the same as the Universal Self. Finally, the insistence on the efficacy of the name of God, as in the Kalisantaranopanishad, irrespective of any ritualistic or devotional ceremonialism is offered as an excellent means for the rejection of all the sectarian modes of worship in the interests of a higher philosophy of devotion.1

The cosmological views of the new Upanishads may generally be said to be of five kinds. The Nrsimhapūrvatāpanī Upa offers a mythical or ritualistic account of the creation of the world inasmuch as it tells us that the world came into being from the Anushtubh or Sāman. Creation from water and either is advocated respectively in the Brhajjābālopanishad and the Nrsimhapūrvatāpanī Upa. Like the Purāṇas the New Upanishads also credit the various gods

with creative power. In fact, they are described as having created, supported, destroyed or re-created the world, as they pleased. The cosmology of the Avyaktopanishad, however, is a mythico-philosophical one, inasmuch as it adopts both kinds of categories in its explanation of the creation of the world while the cosmological thought of the Tripādvibhūtimahānārāyaṇa Upa. is very complex in nature—being a fusion of Theology, Advaita Vedānta and Sāmkhya. Lastly, the illusionistic theory of creation explains the origin of the world from Māyā. In the Sarasvatīrahasya Upa., for example, we are told that the world was created out of Māyā which is identified with the goddess Sarasvatī. In the Rāmatāpanī Upa. and in the Sītopanishad, Sītā is identified with Prakṛti or creative power of god Rāma.

The New Upanishads used a large number of Paurāņika-Tāntrika symbols. Vibhūti or the holy ashes, also called Bhasita Bhasma Kshara, etc., is extolled in the Brhajjābālā and Bhasmajābāla Upanishadas as the primary existence and the internal self of all beings. The symbols Rudrāksha and Akshamālā are extolled respectively in the Rudrākshajābālopanishad and the Akshamālikopanishad. The importance of the Tripundra is hinted at in the Bṛhajjābāla and Bhasmajābāla Upanishads and discussed in detail in the Kālāgnirudropanishad. Yajñopavīta and Šikhā are described as prominent insignia of Brāhmaṇahood in several Upanishads. Anushtubh, praised even in the old Upanishads, is extolled in the Nṛsimhapūrvatāpinī and the Nrsimhottaratāpinī Upanishads as the cause of all that exists. Anushtubh is also identified with the symbol Om which is made to stand for the identify of the microcosm and the macrocosm, thus representing the oneness of the Self and Brahman (Nādabindūpanishad).

The symbolism of the New Upanishads contains copious references to Tāntrika terminology also. Some of the New Upanishads, for example, the Śrīvidyāmnāyopanishad and Tripuratāpanyupanishad, are entirely Tāntrika in nature. The Tāntrika symbols such as Bindu, Nāda, Rajas, Bīja, Sthāna, Śakti, Mantra, Yantra, Chakra and Tāraka occur in them frequently. In the Yogakunādalinī Upanishad the Bindu is described as the cause of creation and sustenance of the world. Nāda, we are told in the Dhyānabindūpanishad, is subtler than Bindu. The terms Bīja, Sthāna, and Šakti are used in the Nrsimhapūrvatāpinī Upa. in the description of its great mantra. A Mantra is defined in the Rāmapūrvatāpinī Upa.

as god's name which, when mediated upon, protects the devotee. Yantra is a geometrically represented Mantra. Gods are pleased if they are worshipped by means of Yantras. Chakra is closely related to Yantra; in fact, it is only a kind of Yantra. This is also thought to be useful in pleasing the gods. Various Chakras are found described in different Upanishads, e.g. the Śrīchakra in the Tripuratāpini Upanishad.

Here we may briefly touch some other aspects of the neo. Upanishadic thought. The New Upanishads delineate the Sannyasa āśrama in detail. They describe the qualifications of a Sannyāsin. kinds of Sannyasa, the Orders of Sannyasins, etc. They repeatedly reiterate the idea that mind is the cause of men's bondage or freedom and that he is bound when his mind is attached to desires and that freedom comes with desirelessness which can be obtained by the conquest of mind through yoga.

Yoga is described in detail in many of these texts. The Yogachūdāmaņi Upa. tells us that man has three bodies, namely the gross or material body, the subtle or Lingasarīra and the causal body. Several of these texts discuss Nādīs, the Chakras or plexuses, and the Kundalini. In the Darsanopanishad we are told that the body is 96 angulas in length, and in the middle of it is a triangular plexus, the abode of the all-purifying light. In the Yogasikhopanishad yoga is described as being four-fold: Hathayoga, Mantrayoga, Layayoga and Rājayoga. As pointed out by Gajendragadkar, the Mantra and Laya Yogas may be included in Rājayoga and one may say that there are only two main divisions of Yoga, namely. Hathayoga and Rajayoga. Both these aim at the attainment of Reality through mind-control, but they recommend different methods for its attainment. The aim of Rajayoga was practical communion with God. Hathayoga starts with the purification and control of the brain and the nervous system by such processes as āsanas, bandhas and mudrās, and holds out before the initiate the attainment of such occult powers as clairvoyance and clairaudience. Three very monstrous processes prescribed by Hathayoga are called Vajroli, Amaroli and Sahajoli. Vajroli is the process in which a pot-full of milk is drawn in by the generative organ by means of a tube and is later on thrown out. In the process of Amaroli one is required to drink and snuff one's own urine every day. These processes of Hathayoga are regarded as being useful in rousing the Kundalini.

Smṛtis, Bhāshyas and Nibandhas

Although the Vedas are regarded as the ultimate source of dharma, in practice it is the Smrtis, Smrti digests (nibandhas), commentaries (bhāshyas) and the Smṛti material in the Purāṇas to which the Paurānika and Smārta Hindus all over India turn for the exposition of religious duties and usages.1 The Smrtis are generally regarded as the expanded and metrical versions of the Dharmasūtras. Some scholars even believe that each Smṛti was based upon a corresponding Dharmasūtra.2 The Smṛtis have, however, incorporated the contemporary local customs and usages of the sishtas (learned and cultured) and much of the Mahābhārata material. In this way they have tried to keep abreast of changing times and reflect their spirit. The Smrti works extend over a period of eight hundred years or even more. As in the case of Dharmasūtras, we have a large number of Smṛtis which are ascribed to old rshis but are actually of comparatively late origin.3 It is indeed extremely difficult to make a chronological stratification of the Smṛti materials, because each of these texts was not only elaborated with the passage of time, but the material incorporated at one time reflects views which had become traditional by that time, and also current usages and practices along with suggestions for the future.4

The Mānava Dharmaśāstra or Manusmṛti is the oldest, the bestknown and the most respected work of this class. It was probably based upon a Mānava Dharmasūtra, which is now lost, but quota-

¹For a detailed study of the Dharmasastra literature, see Kane, P. V., History of Dharmaśāstra, I.

²Bühler, Eng. trans. of Manusmṛti, Intro. (SBE, XXV); for a study of the relations of the Dharmasūtras and Smrtis and also their importance for the study of dharma, vide Ramaswami Sastri, V.A., 'The Dharma-sūtras and the Dharma-śāstras', CHI, II, pp. 301-311. For the study of dharma as enunciated in the Smrtis, vide Venkatarama Sastri, T.R., 'The Smrtis', Ibid., pp. 312-34; also Raghvan, V., 'The Manu Samhita', ibid., pp. 335-63 and Ranajit Singh, Dharma ki Hindu Avadhāraņā, Allahabad, 1977, p. 22 ff.

³AIU, p. 225.

⁴Singh, S., Evolution of the Smrti Law, Varanasi, 1972,

tions from which have been traced in the Vasishtha Dharmasūtra.¹ According to its own claim it was composed by the Divine Creator who taught it to Bhrgu and other rshis. This theory of divine origin undoubtedly gave it a sacrosant character. According to modern scholars, however, it was composed between 200 B.C. and A.D. 200 and was possibly revised several times. The Smrti itself admits more than one redaction of the text, and the Nāradasmṛti says that the original Manusmṛti was successively abridged by Nārada, Mārkaṇḍeya and Sumati.²

There are many other Smrti texts of a more or less similar nature of which those of Vishnu, Yājūavalkya, Nārada, Bṛhaspati and Kātyāyana are regarded as more important than others. These were written between the first and the seventh centuries A.D. After them were composed the Smrtis of Devala and Vyāsa.

By the seventh century A.D. the age of the composition of the original Dharmaśāstra literature was over and commentators and writers of digests (nibandhas) took the field. The first of the important commentators was Asahāya (seventh cent. A.D.). He was followed by Viśvarūpa who wrote his Balakrīdā on the Yajñavalkyasmṛti before Vijñāneśvara who thrice refers to it in his The most celebrated early bhashyakara is of course Mitāksharā. Medhātithi (9th century) who is regarded as the most authoritative commentator of the Manusmṛti. Among other writers on Dharmaśāstra belonging to the Pratihāra period (750-1000 A.D.) may be mentioned Bharuchi, Śrīkara, and Yogloka who are known only "Vijnaneśvara's Mitakshara represents the from quotations. essence of Dharmaśāstra speculation that preceded it, and became the fountain-head from which flowed fresh streams of exegesis".3 The Mitāksharā is not a mere bhāshya on ihe Yājñavalkyasmṛti, but is in the nature of a nibandha of the Smrti materials. other famous Bengal authors are included Aniruddha, Ballalasena and Halayudha. Kullukabhatta, the author of the Manvarthamuktāvalī, the most famous of the commentaries on the Manusmṛti, also belonged to Bengal.

As compared to commentaries on particular Smrtis, the digests contained a synthesis of all the dicta of the ancient Smrtis-

¹AIU, p. 256.

² Ibid.

³Struggle for Empire, p. 333.

kāras on the various topics of Dharma.¹ The two compilations Chaturvimsatimata and Shattrimsanmata also belong to this age. The first contains a summary of the teachings of 24 sages. The second is known only from quotations. It is interesting to note that both are decidedly anti-Buddhist, and the latter even prescribes a bath for touching the Buddhists, Pāsupatas, Jainas, atheists, and followers of Kapila.²

The post-Pratihāra period was the golden age of the digest writing. Jīmūtavāhana was the greatest of the early Bengal writers of this period. Only three of his works are known, viz. Kālaviveka, Vyavahāramātṛkā, and Dāyabhāga. Śrīdhara's Smṛṭyarthasāra deals with the usual Dharmaśāstra topics. The Smṛṭichandrikā of Devaṇṇabhaṭṭa is also a well-known and extensive digest on the Dharmaśāstra. Hemādri, an officer of the Yādava king of Devagiri, wrote his Chaturvargachintāmaṇi which is an encyclopaedia of ancient religious rites and observations.

¹Ibid., p. 330 ff. For a detailed study of the various nibandha schools vide Bhattacharya, D.C., 'The Nibandhas', CHI, II, p. 364-80.

²The Age of the Imperial Kanauj, p. 202.

The Struggle for Empire, p. 333 ff.

Chapter 2

Philosophical Background of Smarta and epic-Pauranika Religion

Classification of Schools and General Development

According to a traditional classification, the schools of Indian philosophy (which provide philosophical bases to Indian religious sects) are divided into two broad groups viz. orthodox (āstika) and heterodox (nāstika). To the first group belong the six chief philosophical systems (popularly known as sad-darśana), namely, Mīmāmsā, Vedānta, Sāmkhya, Yoga, Nyāya and Vaiśeshika. These regarded as orthodox (āstika), not because they believe in God, but because they accept the authority of the Vedas. Under the heterodox systems are included the Chārvākas, the Buddhists and the Jainas. They are called heterodox (nāstika) bkcause they do not believe in the authority of the Vedas. According to T.R. V. Murti this classification errs by being at once too narrow (as it does not include the non-Advaitic and Saiva schools etc.) and too wide (if the intention is to include basic schools only, for there are only three basic systems—the Sāmkhya, the Nyāya-Vaiśeshika and the Advaita Vedanta). Murti himself suggests that the Indian philosophy flows from two vital streams-Ātmavāda of the Upanishads and the Anatmavada of the Buddha. According to him Buddhism and Jainism were not deviations but rather radical departures from the Atmavada of the Upanishads.1 We have discussed this view elsewhere.2

All the ancient Indian philosophical systems grew through several stages. The philosophical views formulated by a great man

¹Murti, T.R.V., 'Rise of the Philosophical Schools', CHI, 111, pp. 27-40. ²Goyal, S.R., A Religious History of Ancient India, 1, p. 236 ff.; 257 ff.

in the dim past were gradually defined and systematized by a succession of followers in the shape of philosophical Sūtras or Kārikās. Then each system, as it grew, elaborated its own doctrines to meet criticisms of its opponents and offer solutions of new problems. This was done by the composition of texts which professed to be merely commentaries on the preeding Sūtra works. The later Indian philosophers thus remained content with writing merely commentaries or commentaries on commentaries (bhāshya, tīka, etc.). Even Śańkarāchārya, the greatest Indian philosopher, wrote merely commentaries on the Brahmasūtra, the Bhagavadgītā, and the Upanishads.¹

Nyāya and Vaiśeshika

Although even in the earliest stages of their history the schools of Nyaya and Vaiseshika held independent positions both in epistemology and metaphysics, yet it was recognised from the very beginning that their differences are of minor importance.2 The Nyāya philosophy, which was essentially a school of logic, was traditionally founded by the great sage Gautama (also known as Gotama and Akshapada), the author of the Nyayasūtra, though Jayanta asserts that there was logic before Gautama, even as Mīmāmsā was before Jaimini and grammar before Pāṇini and the Chhāndogya Upanishad refers to Vākovākya, which Sankara interprets as Tarkaśāstra. The subsequent works of the Nyāya system, such as Vātsayāyana's Nyāyabhāshya, Uddyotakara's Nyāyavārttika, Nyāyavārttikatātparyatīkā, Udayana's Nyāyavārt-Vāchaspati's tikatātparyapariśuddhi and Kusumānjali, Jayanta's Nyāyamanjarī, etc., explain and develop the ideas contained in the Nyāyasūtra and also defend them against the criticism of opponents.

The Nyāya system is a realistic philosophy based mainly on logical grounds. It accepts four separate sources of true know-ledge, namely perception (pratyaksha), inference (anumāna), comparison (upamāna) and testimony (śabda). All other sources of knowledge have been reduced by the Naiyāyikas to these four.

The objects of knowledge, according to the Nyāya school, are the self, the body, the senses and their objects, cognition (buddhi),

¹Murti, op, cit., p. 32.

²Mookerjee, Satkari, 'Nyāya-Vaiseshika', CHI, III, pp. 91-124.

mind (manas), activity (pravṛtti), mental defects (dosha), rebirth (pretyabhāba), the feelings of pleasure and pain (phala), suffering (dukkha), and freedom from suffering (apavarga).

The Nyāya, like many other systems of Indian philosophy, believes that freedom of the self from the bondage to the body, the sense and their objects is the summum bonum of life. Liberation (apavarga) means the absolute cessation of all pain and suffering brought about by the right knowledge of reality (tattvajñāna). view that it is a state of happiness is wrong, for there is no pleasure without pain, just as there is no light without shade. therefore is only release from pain, and not happiness. Under the loving care and wise guidance of the Divine Being whose existence is sought to be proved by a number of arguments all souls can attain right knowledge about themselves and the world, and thereby mukti (final release) from all suffering.

According to Garbe, who is supported by Radhakrishnan, the Vaiseshika system is of much greater antiquity than the Nyāya.1 It takes its name from viśesha or particularity. It was founded by Kaṇāda alias Ulūka, the author of the Vaiśeshikasūtra. is divided into ten adhyāyas. The later works on the Vaiśeshika combine this system with the Nyāya. Of these Sivāditya's Saptapadārthī, Laugākshī Bhāskara's Tarkakaumudī and Viśvanātha's Bhāshāparichchheda with its commentary Siddhāntamuktāvalī are important.

The Vaiseshika system is allied to the Nyāya and believes that the liberation of the individual self is the summum bonum of life. It is based on a system of atomism, explaining the cosmic process in which the soul is involved. It brings all objects of knowledge, i.e. the whole world, under the seven categories of substance (dravya), quality (guna), action (karman), (sāmānya), particularity (viśesha), the relation of inherence (samavāya), and non-existence (abhāba). There are nine kinds of substances, viz. earth, water, fire, air, ether $(\bar{a}k\bar{a}sa)$, time, space, soul and mind (manas). A quality is that which exists in a substance and has itself no quality or activity. Particularity (viśesha) is the ground of the ultimate differences between things. With regard to God the Vaiseshika theory is substantially the same as that of the Nyaya.

¹Radhakrishnan, Ind. Phil., II, p. 177; Garbe, The Philosophy of Ancient India, p. 20.

Sāmkhya and Yoga

The first mention of the Samkhya is found in the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad (VI. 13) though some vague anticipations of the Samkhya theory of Purusha and Praktti are found in the cosmology of the RV also. It has also been suggested that the roots of the dualism of Sāmkhya may go back to the Indus civilization in the worship of the male principle in the form of Pasupati, and the female principle in the form of the mother goddess.1 In the Upanishads the Sāmkhya philosophy assumes clearer shape. In the Katha Upanishad, the unmanifested (avyakta) stands at the top of an evolution series on the plane of matter, from which the great self (mahānātmā), intellect, mind, objects and senses spring in succession. The Śvetāśvatara Upanishad gives a more developed account of the Samkhya principles of the cosmos and the three gunas, though in it the Sāmkhya elements are subordinated to theism, its main teaching. In the Mbh., the Anugītā explains the distinction of Purusha and Prakrti. Generally, the Sāmkhya views, as we meet with them in the Upanishads, the Mbh., (including the Gītā and Anugītā) and Manusmrti lean to theism.

According to tradition, the first work of the Sāmkhya school was the Sāmkhyasūtra of Kapila. This being very brief and terse, Kapila himself wrote an elaborate work entitled the Sāmkhya-pravachanasūtra. After Kapila his disciple Āsurī, and Āsurī's disciple Pañchaśikha wrote some books. All these treatises were lost in course of time. Īśvarakṛshṇa's Sāmkhyakārikā is the earliest available authoritative text of this school. Gaudapāda's Sāmkhya-kārikābhāshya, Vāchaspati's Tattvakaumudī and Vijñānabhikshu's Sāmkhyapravachanabhāshya and Sāmkhyasāra are also important works of this system.

As regards the Yoga philosophy, its roots definitely go back to the Indus civilization. Crude ideas about the value of ecstasy and hypnotic trance are found in the RV. In the AV the idea is very common that supernatural powers can be obtained through the practice of anusterities. The Upanishads regard tapas and brahmacharya as virtues productive of great power. Those Upanishads which speak of the Sāmkhya theories refer to the Yoga

¹cf. RAHI, p. 34.

²Ibid., p. 20, 33.

practices as well. The Katha, the Śvetāśvatara and the Maitrāyani refer to the practical side of religious realisation, as different from the theoretical investigation of the Sāṁkhya. Yoga, as a technical term occurs in the Katha, the Taittirīya and the Maitrāyanī Upanishads though it cannot be maintained that the Yoga mentioned in them is identical with the Yoga of Patañjali. The Buddha also practised Yoga in both its senses.

The Yogasūtra or the Pātañjalasūtra is the first work of this school. Vyāsa wrote a brief but valuable commentary on the Yogasūtra called Yogabhāshya. Vachaspati's Tattvavaiśāradī is a commentary on Vyāsa's commentary. Bhojarāja's Vṛtti and Yogamaṇiprabhā are simple popular works on the Yoga philosophy. Vijñānabhikshu's Yogavārttika and Yogasārasamgraha are other useful texts on the Yoga philosophy.

We have given a brief outline of the philosophical tenets of the Sāmkhya and Yoga systems in our discussion on their relation with Buddhism.¹

Pūrva Mīmāmsā

The Pūrva Mīmāmsā or Karma Mīmāmsā (orsimply the Mīmāmsā, as it is usually called) was the outcome of the ritualistic side of the Vedic thought just as the Vedānta or Uttara Mīmāmsā was the development of its speculative side. The object of the Mīmāmsā system was to help and support Vedic ritualism by (a) giving it a methodology of interpretation with which the intricate Vedic rules regarding rituals could be understood, and (b) supplying it a philosophical justification for the principles on which ritualism rested.

The foundation of the Pūrva Mīmāmsā was laid by Jaimini's Sūtras (abobt 4th cent. B.C.). According to tradition he was a disciple of Bādarāyaṇa whom he mentions in his Sūtras (1.1.5). Bādarāyaṇa is sometimes identified with Veda Vyāsa. Sabarasvāmī wrote the main Bhāshya on it (about 1st cent. B.C.). He was followed by a long line of bhāshyakāras and independent writers chief of them being Kumārila (author of Ślokavārttika) and Prabhā-

²Pramathanath Tarkabhushan, Mahamahopadhyaya, 'Pūrva-Mīmāmsā',

CHI, III, pp. 151-67.

¹RAHI, I, pp. 259-66; cf. also Radhakrishnan, Ind. Phil., 11, Ch. IV and V; Hiriyanna, M., 'The Sāmkhya', CHI, III, pp. 41-52; Bhattacharya, Haridas, 'Yoga Psychology', ibid., pp. 53-90.

kara (nicknamed 'Guru'), who founded the two schools of Mīmāmsā known after their names.

As the authority of the Vedas is the basis of ritualism, the Mīmāmsā believes that the Vedas are eternal and self-revealed (apaurusheya). The written or pronounced Vedas are only their temporary manifestations through particular ishis. For establishing the authoritativeness of the Vedas (Vedaprāmānyam) the Mīmāmsā elaborates a theory of knowledge, which aims to show that the validity of every knowledge is self-evident.

Other main principles of the Mīmāmsā school are: what the Vedas command one to perform is dharma, what they forbid is adharma. Soul is an immortal eternal substance, for if the soul perishes on death, the Vedic rites which are performed for the attainment of heaven (svarga) would become meaningless. Physical world is real on the strength of its perception. The Mīmāmsā is, therefore, realistic. The law of karman is a spontaneous moral law that rules the world. On account of the potency (apūrva) generated in the soul by rites performed here, one can enjoy their fruits in heaven. The deities occupy a secondary place in this system—nay it even denies their existence as something separate from the mantra. On the question of the existence of omnicient, omnipotent, all-merciful God, Jaimini, Šabarasvāmī and Kumārila are silent.

Uttara Mīmāmsā or Vedānta

The term 'Vedānta' literally means 'the end of the Vedas', that is the Upanishads and the doctrines set forth in them. Afterwards its denotation widened to include all thoughts developed out of the Upanishads. In this capacity the Upanishads are regarded as the first of the three Prasthānas of the Vedānta. They represented the secret meanings (rahasya) of the Veda, but the problems discussed and solutions offered in them present differences in spite of a unity in general outlook. Therefore, in course of time need was felt for systematizing the different teachings so as to bring out the harmony underlying them. The Gītā and Bādarāyaṇa's Brahma sūtra (also known as Vedānta sūtra, Śārīrakasūtra, Śārīraka mīmāmsā or Uttara mīmāmsāsūtra), respectively the Smṛti Prasthāna

¹¹bid., p. 166.

²Ibid., p. 167.

and the Nyāya Prasthāna of Vedānta, fulfilled this need.¹

Gītā as a Vedānta Text

The Gītā is the Smrti Prasthāna of the Vedānta. As we have suggested in Ch. 1, both the Glta and the Brahmasūtras of Bādarāyana were composed in the fifty century B.C. though it is just possible that the Gītā is slightly earlier than the Brahmasūtras (supra). There can hardly be any doubt that the $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$ shows a full knowledge of the Vedanta of the Upanishads. It tells us that Ātman is the true reality. Birth, desease, death, etc. are merely accidents in the external life of the Atman by which it is not touched and which deserve to be ignored as having no reality (II. 12 ff.). The Atman is unborn and eternal and does not die with death or suffer with the suffering body. The Ātman is incapable of doing any action; actions are falsely ascribed to it (III. 27-29). It is omnipresent and or immanent in everything (VI. 30, VII. 7; IX 4-6), centre of all beings, organic as also non-organic. It can be realized through knowledge. There are Yogic methods of self realization. Recognition is also made of the Upanishadic doctrines of Devayana and Pitryana (VIII. 13-17). Thus there is quite a good representation of the Upanishadic teachings in the Glta, though it calls this the Sāmkhya teaching. The $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$ derives from Sāmkhya the notions of samsāra and moksha and of the actionless Purusha contrasted with the ever active Prakrti

But God in the Gītā is more than the Upanishadic Brahman or the Sāmkhyan Purusha. He is the Supreme Person (Purushottama), other than the individual soul and insentient Nature, controlling them both. He is one God behind all gods. All worship ultimately goes to Him. Those who love Him for his own sake reach Him.2 Thus the Gitā made explicit the concept of

¹Some schools of Vednāta regard the Bhāgavata P. as the Fourth Prasthāna. For the study of the background of the three Prasthanas, vide Svami Vimalananda, 'The Prasthāna-Traya and its Background', Vedānta Kesarī, XLIX, No. 12 and X, No. 1-3, 6; cf. also, Modi, P.M., 'The Doctrine of Prasthāna Trayī: It is valid,' Journal of the Oriental Institute, XVII, Pt. 1, 1967, pp. 52-8.

²Patrick Olivelle ('Concept of God in the Bhagavadgītā,' International Philoshphy Quarterly, New York, Dec. 1964) complains that there are glaring inconsistencies in the teachings of the Gītā, particularly in respect of the metaphysical doctrines. His arguments are ably examined by H. Bhattacharya, 'Critical Observations on the Concept of God in the Bhagavadgītā,' Indian Philosophy and Culture', Vrindaban, X, No. 1, 1965, pp. 40-46.

bhakti which was only latent in the Upanishads. We have discussed this aspect of the teaching of the Gltā in the chapter on bhakti.

Brahmasűtra of Bādarāyaṇa

Even when Bādarāyaṇa wrote his sūtra, there existed wide differences of opinion about such topics as the characteristics of the released soul and the relation of the individual soul with Brahman. Bādarāyaņa himself quotes the opinion of Bādari, Āśmarathya, Audulomi, Kārshņājini and Kāśakṛtsna who flourished before him. The view of some of them on some topics are known, though their works are lost. For example Asmarathya held the bhedabheda view of the relation of the soul to Brahman-that it is neither absolutely different nor absolutely non-different from it. Audulomi propounded the view that the soul is altogether different from Brahman up to the time of final release when it becomes merged in it, and Kāśakṛtsna opined that the soul is absolutely identical with Brahman which, in some way or other, presents itself as the individual soul.1 The later interpreters of Vedanta usually accept one or more of these views.

The date and identity of Bādarāyaṇa is not certain. Jacobi's view that he flourished in the Gupta age is certainly wrong.² Indian tradition asserts that Bādarāyaṇa was no other than Vyāsa. As noted earlier Pāṇini refers to a Bhikshusūtra of Pārāśarya (the son of Parāśara Vyāsa). Gopinātha Kavirāja is of the opinion that it is the same as the Vedāntasūtra of Bādarāyaṇa. Against this it has been urged that Bādarāyaṇa refers to the views of Jaimini and Jaimini was, according to the Vishṇu Purāṇa, the Mbh. and the Bhāgavata a pupil of Vyāsa. Thus if Bādarāyaṇa is to be identified with Vyāsa then we should assume that the teacher and disciple both refer to each other. Sabara, Govindānanda and Ānandagiri, however do not find any inconsistency in it.³ As regards the date of the Vedāntasūtra Keith holds that it cannot be later than 200 A.D. Indian scholars, however, generally place it in the period

¹Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, p. 432; for a detailed study of these pre-Bādarāyaņa Vedāntins vide Kavirāja, Gopinātha, *Bhāratīya Samskṛti aura Sādhanā*, p. 77 ff.

²Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, 105.

Radhakrishnan, op. cit., p. 433.

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from 500 B.C. to 200 B.C. Frazer also assigns it to 400 B.C. We ourselves have placed it in the fifth century B.C. (supra).

The Vedānta sūtra, regarded as the Nyāya Prasthāna (Point of Departure) of Vedānta, has four chapters. The first (samanvaya) which begins with the sūtra athāto Brahma-Jijñāsā, deals with the theory of Brahman as the central reality—as the source, support and end of the world. The second (avirodha) meets objections brought against this view and criticises rival theories of Sāmkhya, Vaišeshika, Buddhist, Jaina, Pāšupata and Pāñcharātra. The third discusses the ways and means (sādhanā) of attaining Brahmavidyā while the fourth deals with the fruits (phala) of Brahmavidyā.

Bādarāyana affirms a monistic view of the world. He has nothing to do with polytheism or a plurality of independent and equally ultimate reals or unoriginate souls or a dualism between God and the Evil One. However his Sūtras reflect the indecision and vagueness characteristic of the Upanishads, whose teachings it attempts to summarize.

Pre-Śankara Vedantin Āchāryas

The Vedāntasūtra being brief and the Gītā being a synthetic treatise, both were liable to different interpretations. Therefore a number of commentaries came to be written to elaborate the doctrines of the Vedānta in the light of the new developments. The authors of the chief commentaries (bhāshyas) became founders of particular schools of Vedānta. Thus we have the schools of Šankara, Rāmānuja, Madhva, Vallabha, Nimbārka and many others. But in the present state of our knowledge, the leap from the Gītā and the Brahmasūtra to the Advaitism of Šankara (788-820 A.D.) leaves an extensive gap of over one thousand years uncovered. This period saw a large number of Vedāntāchāryas whose works are now lost. Among the predecessors of Śankara, whose views were akin to his, was Bhartrhari, the famous logician and grammarian.² According to Max Müller, he

¹Dr. G.C. Pande places the *Vedāntasūtras* between 200 B.C. and 200 A.D. (op. cit.).

²For the study of Advaita Vedānta before Śańkara, vide Aurobindo, 'Śańkara's Philosophy ancient Vedānta' *Mother Indi*a, XVIII, No. 6, 1966, pp. 13-14.

died, about A.D. 650. His great philosophical works is Vakyapadīya, which is more or less Buddhist in its tendencies. In his commentary on the Brhadāranyaka Upa. Sankara also refers to the dvaitadvaita (or bhedabheda) of Bhartr prapañcha, according to which Brahman is at once one and dual. Hiriyanna has assigned Bhartrprapañcha to about 600 A.D. Next we may consider Gaudapada who was the first systematic exponent of the Advaita Vedanta. He is reputed to be the teacher of Sankara's teacher Govinda, and must have lived about the beginning of the eighth century or the end of the seventh. To him the authorship of the Gaudapādīyakārikās is traditionally assigned. He is also supposed to have been the author of a commentary on the Sāmkhyakārikā of Isvarakṛshṇa, and a commentary on the Uttaragītā. Walleser however, believed that Gaudapada was not an individual name and that the Gaudapādīya kārikā cannot possibly belong to a date later than about 500 A.D.1

Sankarāchārya: His Life and Date

Of all the philosophical systems, the Advaita or Monist Vedanta as interpreted by Śańkara, has exerted the greatest influence on Indian thought. It still persists in some form or other in different parts of India.

Not many definite facts about the life-history of Sankara are known.2 Some of the followers of Sankara compiled biographical accounts of which the chief are Mādhava's Śankaradigvijaya (16th century) and Ānandagiri's Śańkaravijaya (12th cent.). Chidvilasavati and Sadananda Vyasa also wrote some accounts and the Skandapurāņa provides a few facts. But these accounts are full of miraculous episodes and of little historical value.3 Much confusion has been created by the fact that his successors at the four pīthas established by him, were subsequently known as Śankarāchâryas which made it difficult for the biographers to differentiate

¹Contra, Belvalkar, op. cit., p. 182 ff.

²Cf. Rao, P. Nagaraja, 'Śrī Sańkara: India's Great Philosopher', Vedanta Kesari, L, No. 2, 1963, pp. 58-62; 'Sankara's Mysticism', ABORI, XXX, Pt. iv, 1954, pp. 84-90.

²Cf. Aiyar, Krishnaswami, C.N., Life and Times of Samkara; Upadhyaya, Baladeva, Śrī Sańkarāchārya, in Hindi, Allahabad, V.E. 2020. Upadhyaya gives a list of 22 much works.

between the various personages of the same name. Even his date is sot definite. According to Guruparamparāsmṛtis preserved at Kāmakotipītham at Kānchī Ādi Sankara was born in 508 or 509 B.C., while the Singeripitha records place his birth in 44 B.C.1 and the tradition of the Dvarkapītha in 471 B.C.2 The Kerolotpatti however places his birth in 400 A.D.3

Modern scholars also considerably differ on this point. According to Telang Sankara flourished about the middle or the end of the sixth century A.D. B. Upadhyaya places him in seventh century. Sir R.G. Bhandarkar proposes A.D. 680 as the date of Śankara's birth, and is even inclined to go a few years earlier. However, modern scholars generally agree with Max Müller, K.B. Pathak, S.K. Belvalkar and Macdonell who hold that Sankara was born in A.D. 788, and died in A.D. 820.4 That he flourished in the first quarter of the ninth century was also the view of Professor Keith.5

According to the generally accepted tradition, Sankara was born in a simple hardworking family of Nambūdrī Brāhmaņas of Kālatī or Kāladī in the Cochin State (Keral) and was the son of Sivaguru and Āryambā. He seems to have been an extraordinarily gifted child. His mother, in the course of her long and uneventful wedded life with the pious and learned Sivaguru, prior to the birth of their famous son, appears to have acquired a taste for religiophilosophical speculations, a fact which must have exerted great influence on the child Sankara. He commenced regular Vedic studies at the early age of five, resolved to lead the celibate life of

¹Sekhyananda, Swami, 'Historicity of Śańkarāchārya in the Light of Kerala Traditions and Tamil Epigraphical Records,' Studies in Religion and Change, ed. by Madhu Sen, 1983, pp. 73-78.

⁴This date is given in short MS first brought to light by K.B. Pathak and also in the Sankaravijaya of Krshna Brahmananda and the Sankaramandarasaurabha of Nilakantha Bhatta (Belvalkar, op. cit., p. 211).

According to Swami Sekhyananda (op. cit.) Adi Śańkara, born in the family of Nambūdri Brāhmaņas, should be placed in 508 B.C. He was different from Kāladī Śańkara, born in the family of Śivadvijanambis, who flourished in 8th-9th century A.D. (contra, Belvalkar, op. cit., p. 232, note).

According to another tradition he was born at Chidambaram in South Arcot and was the son of Visvajit and Visishta.

²Upadhyaya, op. cit., p. 37.

an ascetic when eight, and left the household in search of a spiritual teacher two years later. This he found in Govindayati who was practising austerities in the mountains adjoining the Narmadā river where Sankara is reported to have been led through a miracle. After a very brief stay with Govinda, Sankara repaired to Benares where, like the Buddha, he started his regular career as a preacher and a prophet, won his first disciples and had his first successful disputation (according to legends with Bādarāyaṇa Vyāsa himself, the author of the Brahmasūtra).

Right at the very start of his career, Śankara had to face the opposition of the Mīmāmsists, the exponents of the more rigorous orthodoxy who, even more than the Sāmkhyas and the Buddhists, were obstacle in the path of the victory of monism. encountered the famous Kumārila just as the latter was about to undergo (by way of a self-imposed penance for having sought to destroy his quondum teachers, the Buddhists) self-immolation in fire. Then he defeated and converted Mandana Miśra (and Mandana's wife Bhāratī) and secured an ally fully equipped with the armoury of logic. According to tradition Mandana became his disciple under the name of Sureśvarāchārya, though many scholars including Gopinatha Kavirāja and G.C. Pande do not accept the identity of Mandana and Sureśvara. Afterwards he met a few other minor opponents, travelled extensively and made several pupils. One of the most notable of these was a dumb son of Prabhakara, the Mīmāmsist. Who recovered his power of speech with the grace of Śankara and, as Hastāmalaka, became proficient in all the Śāstras. Another was Sanandana whose loyalty to Śańkara reportedly enabled him to perform the miracle of walking on the waters, in consequence of which he became celebrated as 'Padmapada'. In the South Śankara defeated the Kāpālikas also.

In his spare moments Śańkara composed his major and minor works. Tradition is persistent about his visit to Nepal also. In his later life he was involved in the jealousies and bickerings among his favourite disciples. He died at the age of thirty-two, the victim, we are told, of an abhichāra or black magic set into operation by a Śākta opponent. According to one set of traditions he died at

¹Kavirāja, Gopinātha, Bhāratīya Sanskṛti aura Sādhnā, I, p. 106; Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 111.

Kāñchī; according to other sources he breathed his last at Badari-kāśrama.

Though there is a tradition that Siva was the family deity of Sankara, it is also held that he was by birth a Sakta. The story of his entering the dead body of Amaruka (parakāyapraveśa) shows that he was an adept in yogic practices. He established four mathas or monasteries, of which the chief is the one at Śrngerī in the former Mysore state. The others are those at Purī in the East, Dvārakā in the West, and Badarinātha in the Himalyas.

In a few years Sankara practised several careers, each enough to satisfy an ordinary man. He was a philosopher and a poet, a savant and a saint, a mystic and a religious reformer, all rolled into one. There have been few minds more universal and versatile than his. He was rightly regarded as the Jagadguru. He started the practice of 'conquering the quarters' (digvijaya) by disputations. For Hinduism he was Dharmapalaka in the Kali Age (Kaliyuga dharmapalaka).¹

The central texts of the Advaita school are Śańkara's commentaries on the principal Upanishads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Vedāntasūtra. Upadeśasāhasrī and Vivekachūdāmaņi reflect his general position. His popular stotras to the different forms of Godhead, such as Dakshināmurtīstotra, Harimīdestotra, Ānandalaharī and Saundaryalaharī explain his faith in life and justify his love of it. Other works attributed to him are Āptavajrasūchī, Ātmabodha, Mohamudgara, Daśaślokī, Aparokshānubhūti and commentaries on Vishņusahasranāma and Sanatsujātīya.²

¹Bhaktamāla, Chhappaya 42, quoted by Pandey, Sangamalal, Mūla Śāńkara Vedānta, Allahabad, 1979, p. 11.

²Radhakrishnan, *Ind. Phil.*, II, p. 450. According to Belvalkar the works which can almost confidently be called as Śańkara's own include 11 commentaries, 8 stotras and 5 prakaranagranthas. The works which are in the main unauthentic include 15 commentaries, 8 stotras and 8 prakaranagranthas. Apart from these there are 31 commentaries 215 stotras, and 112 prakaranagranthas which are nongenuine. Most of the works which are ascribed to the first Śańkarāchāryas but are not his, were probably composed by the later Śańkarāchāryas (op. cit., p. 218-31).

Advaitavāda of Sankara

Sankara interprets the Upanishads, the GItā and the Brahmasūtra to show that pure and unqualified monism is taught in them.1 Brahman is the only reality, not only in the sense that there is nothing except Brahman but also in the sense that there is no multiplicity within Brahman. Therefore we have to explain the world not as a real creation, but as an appearance which Brahman conjures up with māyā, His inscrutable power. To make the conception of māvā more intelligible to ordinary experience, he explains it with examples of ordinary illusions of daily life such as rope appearing as a snake or a glittering shell appearing as silver. In all such cases there is a reality (e.g. rope, shell) on which something else (e.g. snaka, silver) is superimposed owing to the ignorance of reality. But māyā, the power of Brahman is not a separate reality. It is no more different from Brahman than the power of burning is from fire. Actually $m\bar{a}y\bar{a}$ appears to be the power of Brahman only so long as one believes in the world of appearance. As soon as he realizes that the world is only apparent, that nothing is really created, he ceases to think of Brahman as a Creator.²

In view of this, Sankara distinguishes between two different points of view, the ordinary or empirical (vyāvahārika) and the transcendental or real (pāramārthika). The first is the standpoint of unenlightened persons who look upon the world as real. From this point of view Brahman appears as God qualified by many qualities (Saguna Brahman or Iśvara). The second or the real (pāramārthika) standpoint is that of the enlightened ones who have realized that the world is an appearance and that there is nothing but Brahman. The attainment of this real standpoint is possible only by the removal of ignorance $(avidv\bar{a})$ to which the cosmic illusion is due. The removal of avidyā leads to the realization of the truth: "I am Brahman". The soul then becomes free from all misery and from the illusory ideas that divide it from Brahman. As God

¹Sankaranarayan, P., 'Intimations of Advaita in the Gītā', Vedānta Kesarī, LI, No. 13, 1964, pp. 133-7; Madhavan Brahmachari, 'Advaita Vedānta—A Bird's Eye View', Vedanta Kesari LII, No. 10, 1966, pp. 443-49.

²Raju, P.T., 'The Conception of Sat (Existence) in Sankara's Advaita,' ABORI, XXXV, 1955, pp. 33-45.

is Bliss, so also is the liberated soul.1

Sankara was a great critic of Buddhism and played pivotal role in its eradication from India. According to some ancient as well as modern scholars he was himself greatly influenced by it, so much so that he is accused of being a Buddhist in disguise. Others including \$rī Harsha in ancient times and T.R.V. Murti in modern age do not accept this suggestion. We have discussed the problem of Buddhist influence on Sankara in the first volume of this work (p. 362). Here, however, it may be noted that the Māṇḍukyakārikā of Śankara's paramaguru Gaudapāda is permeated with Mahāyānic influence.2

The best known among Sankara's immediate disciples were Sureśvara and Padmapada. The former was known as Viśvarūpa (according to another view Mandana Miśra) before he became a Sannyāsin. As Sureśvara he wrote a number of Vārttikas. Padmapāda composed a commentary called Pañchapādika on the earlier position of Śankara's Śārīrakabhāshya. After Śankara Advaita continued to occupy central place in the philosophical debate of India. Among the great names of this school of the post-Sankara period are included Sarvajñātmamuni (a disciple of Suresvara). Vāchaspati Miśra (middle of 9th cent.), Śri Harsha, etc.

Rāmānuja and the Viśishţādvaita School

The teaching of the Vedanta were interpreted and developed by Rāmānuja in a different way. Before him Bhāgavatism had entered the South and made a great impact there. The hymns of the poet-saints called Alvars-twelve of whom obtained canonical recognition—are commonly known as Nālāyira Prabandham. They were succeeded by the Acharyas who aimed at establishing a philosophical basis for the worship of personal God and faith in the saving grace of that God.3 The chief of the teachers who

¹Mahadevan, T.M.P., 'The Philosophy of Sankara', Vedanta and the West, No. 174, 1965, pp. 26-30; Aurobindo 'Sankara's Philosophy and Ancient Vedanta', Mother India, XVIII, No. 6, 1966, pp. 13-4.

²Cf. Pande G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 110; Vidhuśekhara Bhattacharya, The Agama śāstra of Gaudapāda, Calcutta, 1943, Intro.; Dasgupta, S.N., History of Indian Philosophy, I, pp. 422-29; contra, Mahadevan, Gandapāda: A Study in Early Advaita, Madras, 1954, ch. IX; Murti, The Central Philosophy of Buddhism, 1955, pp. 109-17; cf. also Majumdar, A.K., Concise History of Ancient India, pp. 846-8.

Radhakrishnan, Ind. Phil., II, p. 669.

preceded Rāmānuja were Näthamuni and Yamunacharya (Alavandar). Nathamuni (tenth century) was a disciple of the last of the Alvars. He is said to have arranged their hymns. Yamunacharya defended the Vaishnava Agamas and argued that they had the same purport as the Vedas. His chief works are: Agamaprāmāṇya, Mahāpurushanirṇaya, Siddhitrayam, Gītārthasamgraha, Chatuśśloki and Stotraratna. The sacred literature of the Vaishņavas is often referred to as Ubhaya Vedānta, since it included the Sanskrit Prasthanatrayī as well as the Tamil Prabandham. Thus it would appear that Rāmānuja's philosophy was based on some of the theistic Upanishads, portions of the Mahābhārata, including its Nārāyanīya section and the Bhagavadgītā, the Vishņu Purāņa, the Vaishņava Āgamas and the works of the Āļvārs and Āchāryas. His own works attempt to provide a philosophy of religion by reconciling the thought of the Upanishads, the Gītā and the Brahmasūtra with the faith and belief of the Vaishnava saints.1

Rāmānuja was born as the son of Keśava Somayājī and Kāntimatī in Śrīperumbudur in the year A.D. 1027. After receiving general education given to boys of his class, he had a course in the Vedānta under Yādavaprakāśa of Conjeevaram, who had written a commentary leaning to the Advaita interpretation of Vedanta. But Rāmānuja could not agree with the interpretations of Yādava on all points. Yāmunāchārya (Āļavandār), the famous head of the matha at Śrīrangam, was impressed by Rāmānuja's learning, and thought of installing him as his successor at Śrīrangam. But by the time Rāmānuja arrived, Yāmuna had died. The tradition avers that when Rāmānuja approached the body of Yāmuna he saw three of the five fingers of the right hand folded. The disciples explained this to mean that he had three unfulfilled desires, the chief of them being the composition of an easy commentary on the Brahmasūtra.2 Rāmānuja returned to Conjeevaram, became a sannayāsin and afterwards settled down at Śrīrangam where he composed Vedantasara, Vedarthasamgraha, Vedantadipa and the commentaries on the Gītā and the Brahmasūtra. The learned Vaishņavas gave approval to his exposition of the Brahmasūtra and it became the commentary (Śrī Bhāshya) for them.

¹Ibid. Cf. Srinivasachari, P.N., 'The Visishţādvaita of Rāmānuja', CHI, III, Pp. 300-312.

^aThe other two desires were the recovery of an image of Śrī Rāma and the popularisation of Viśishtādvaita philosophy.

Rāmānuja toured South India widely, restored Vaishņava temples and converted a large number of people to Vaishņavism. His influence is visible throughout the later history of Hinduism. The movements of Madhva, Vallabha, Chaitanya, Rāmānanda, Kabir and Nanak were considerably indebted to him.

According to Rāmānuja God is the only Reality. There is no distinction between Brahman and Iśvara. He is possessed of all supremely good qualities like omniscience and omnipotence. Within Him exist as parts different unconscious (achit) material objects as well as conscious souls (chit). Just as a spider spins the cobweb out of his own body, so God creates the world of material objects out of matter (achit) which eternally exists in Him. The souls are infinitely small (anu) substances. They also exist eternally. By their very nature they are conscious and self-luminous. Every soul is endowed with a material body in accordance with its deeds. Bondage of the soul means its confinement to this body caused by ignorance. Moksha is complete dissociation of the soul from the body.

God is the only object worthy of love. He is pleased by devotion and releases the devotee from bondage. The liberated soul becomes similar to God, because like God it is pure consciousness free from imperfections; but it does not become identical with God, as the finite can never become infinite.

According to Rāmānuja, as Iśvara or God is the only Reality and there is nothing outside God (though within God there are many other realities) creation of the world and the objects created are all as real as God. His philosophy is therefore, not unqualified monism (advaita) but a monism of the one (God) qualified by the presence of many—conscious souls and unconscious matter (Viśishţādvaita) (cf. p. 15 f.).

Other Forms of Vedānta

Another leading form of reaction against Śańkara's Advaitism was the dualistic philosophy associated with the name of Madhva (b. 1199 A.D.). Madhva is also known as Pūrņaprajña and Ānandatīrtha. He developed his dualistic philosophy during his discussions with his guru Achyutapreksha, a follower of Śańkara's school. Madhva wrote a commentary on the Brahmasūtra and justified his interpretation of it in another work called

Anuvyākhyāna. His commentaries on the Bhagavadgītā and the Upanishads, his epitome of the Mahābhārata called Bhāratatātparyanirnaya and the gloss on the Bhagavata Purana also help to understand his philosophical ideas.

Madhva stood for unqualified dualism and insisted on the five great distinctions of God and the individual soul, God and matter, the individual soul and matter, one soul and another, and one part of matter and another.1

Nimbārka was a Telugu Brāhmaņa of Vaishņava faith. He flourished some time after Rāmānuja and before Madhva, about the eleventh century A.D. He wrote a short commentary on the Brahmasūtra called Vedāntapārijātasaurabha, as well as ten verses, Daśaślokī, elucidating his view of the distinctness of Jīva, Iśvara and Jagat. His theory is called Dvaitadvaita, or dualistic nondualism.2 Keśavakaśmīrin wrote a commentary on the Bhagavadgītā, called Tattvaprakāśikā, in defence of Nimbārka's general philosophy.

Vallabha (1401 A.D.) was also a Telugu Brāhmāņa of South India, who migrated to the North. He developed the views of Vishņusvāmin who belonged to the thirteenth century. He accepted the authority not only of the Upanishads, the Bhagavadgītā and the Brahmasūtra, but also of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa. In his works, Aņubhāshya, Siddhāntarahasya and Bhāgavataṭīkāsubodhinī, he offers a theistic interpretation of Vedanta which differs from those of Sankara and Rāmānuja. His view is called Suddhādvaita or pure non-dualism and declares that the whole world is real and is subtly Brahman.3

Lastly, we may note the attempt of some ancient thinkers to prove that the six systems of Hindu philosophy are not really opposed to each other, but they all proclaim the same eternal Truth. This view is found first in the Prabodhachandrodaya, an allegorical Sanskrit drama written in the court of the Chandella king Kirttivarman (latter half of the eleventh century A.D.). In a famous scene of this drama there is a dispute between the Buddhists the Jainas and the followers of other heterodox sects on the one

¹Cf. Raghavendrachar, H.N., 'Madhva's Brahma Mīmānsā,' CHI, III, pp. 313-32.

²Chaudhuri, Roma, 'The Nimbārka School of Vedānta', CHI, III, pp. 333-346.

For details, cf. Bhatt, G.H., 'The School of Vallabha', CHI, III, pp. 347-59

side, and the Vaishnavas, Śaivas and Sauras, aided by the six schools of philosophy, on the other. It bring out the basic unity of orthodox Hinduism as against the heterodox sects. Vijñāna Bhikshu, a Sāmkhya philosopher of the sixteenth century, also proclaimed the essential unity of the six systems of philosophy.

Chārvāka (Lokāyata) School

The Chārvāka school of thought, also known as the Lokāyata system, was the materialist school of Indian philosophy. Its supporters did not believe in the authority of the Vedas, denounced Vedic sacrifices, rejected the belief in soul, god, heaven and hell and also in śrāddha institution, pilgrimages (tīrtha yātra), vratas, etc. They believed in the existence of four elements only and regarded perception (pratyaksha anubhava) as the only means of knowledge. Garbe, D. Chattopadhyaya and G. C. Pande feel that this school originated in the pre-Buddhist period. Probably it arose as a reaction against the excessive ritualism of the Brāhmaṇas and the idealism of the Upanishads.

Brhaspati is regarded as the traditional founder of this school. His Sūtra, the existence of which we have no reason to doubt, has unfortunately perished. Sometimes this Brhaspati is identified with Devaguru Brhaspati who is said to have propagated materialism among the asuras so that they might be ruined. Chārvāka, after whose name this school is so called, is said to have been the chief disciple of Brhaspati. According to another view, Charvaka himself was the founder of this school, while according to a third view the word 'Chārvāka' is not a proper name but a common name given to the materialists and signifies a person who believes in the maxim 'eat, drink and be marry' (the root 'charv' means 'to eat'), or a person who eats up all moral and ethical values, or who is 'sweet-tongued' (chāruvāk). References to the Chārvākas are also found in the Rāmāyaṇa, Māhābhārata and Manusmṛti. In the Majjhima Nikāya we find a reference to Ajita-Keśakambalin (probably so called because he wore blanket of hair), a materialist who believed only in perception and in four elements. Santarakshita refers to him as Kambalāśvatara (the man with the blanket and a mule).

¹Majumdar, R.C., 'Evolution of Religio-Philosophical Culture in India', CHI, IV, p. 50.

No original work of the Charvaka school is extant except for a very late work Tattvopaplavasimha of Jayarāśibhatta published by the Oriental Institute, Baroda, in 1940. Our chief sources of information about the Chārvākas are, therefore, the quotations from the Bṛhaspatisūtra found in some later philosophical works and the summary of its doctrines as given in the play Prabodhachandrodaya of Kṛshṇapati Miśra, Trishashṭiśalākāpurushacharita of Hemachandra, the Sarvadarśanasamgraha of Mādhava, the Naishadhacharita, etc. But these works quote the views of the Chārvākas only to refute them. Therefore what we get in them is the caricature of their doctrines, and not a true picture.1

In the Chārvāka philosophy perception is regarded as the only valid source of knowledge. The validity of inference is rejected as a leap into the dark. Thus the Chārvākas admit the the existence of four elements—earth, water, fire and air—only (Prthivyāpatejovāyurititattvāni) and reject the fifth, the ether, because it is not perceived but inferred. Similarly they reject soul, god, heaven, etc. because they are not seen. This view has been criticised by all systems of Indian philosophy. To refuse the validity of inference is to refuse, think and discuss. All thoughts, all discussions, all doctrines, all proofs and disproofs are made possible by inference. critics of the Chārvākas pointedly ask: when a Chārvāka goes out of his house his wife cannot see him. Does it mean that she becomes a widow during his absence? We perceive the earth as flat but by inference know that it is almost round. We perceive the earth as static but infer that it is moving round the sun. We perceive the disc of the sun as of small size, but infer that it is much bigger than the earth.

According to the Charvakas everything which exists, including bodies, senses, objects and mind, exists due to a particular combination of the four elements. The elements are eternal, but their combinations undergo production and dissolution. Consiousness or soul is regarded as a mere product of matter (Dehātmavāda). It arises from matter like the intoxicating quality arising from the fermented sugar.

¹According to C. Kunhan Raja ('Cārvāka Systems', Philosophical Quarterly, Amalner, XXXVI, No. 1, 1963, pp. 15-31) it is the Charvakas who continued the thought-pattern of the Rgveda, and it is the later systems of philosophy that have deviated from it.

The Charvakas regard sensual pleasure as the summum bonum of life. Eat, drink and be merry (rnam krtvā ghrtam pibet), for once the body is reduced to ashes, there is no hope of coming back here again. There is no other world. Death is identical with moksha. All religious ceremonies are means of livelihood of the priests. If a beast slain in a sacrifice goes to heaven why then does the sacrificer not sacrifice his own father? If beings in heaven are gratified by our offerings in the śrāddha here, why then not give food from down below to those who are standing on the house-top? The Vedas have no authority. They were written, in the view of Chārvākas, by men-cheats, hypocrites and flesh-eaters. Their language is utter gibberish. Reference is also made to certain unclean customs connected with the horse-sacrifice. Of Dharma, Artha Kāma and Moksha—only Kāma or sensual pleasure is regarded as the end (Kāma evaikaḥ Purushārthaḥ) and Artha or wealth is regarded as the means to realize that end. Dharma and Moksha are altogether rejected.

The Chārvāka philosophy never became popular in India. It was denounced as the philosophy of the low-cultured people (prākṛtajanāḥ). The very word Lokāyata means ordinary (uncultivated) people. The Rāmā. describes the Chārvākas as fools who thought themselves to be wise (Paṇḍitamānināḥ) and as experts in leading people to destruction (anarthakuśalāh). Its unpopularity has been explained as due to its rejection of the authority of the Vedas, denouncement of the Brahmana priests, rejection of God, denial of the soul, and assertion of the reality of matter. most of these features are found in Buddhism and Jainism also. The main causes of its unpopularity should, therefore, be sought in its denial of all those human values which make life worth-living. Life without values is animal life. Sensual pleasure is a mere shadow of the supreme pleasure. There is a qualitative difference in the various types of pleasure. The pleasure of the pig is certainly not the same as the pleasure of the philosopher.1 According to general Hindu thinking man is not merely a biological animal; he is a rational and a moral creature. He should, therefore, instead

¹Compare the difference between the hedonism of Bentham with that of J.S. Mill.

²Cf. Pande, G.C., Śramana Tradition, p. 26.

of falling down to the level of the beast, transform the animal pleasure into human pleasure by means of self-control, education. culture and spiritual discipline.

Indian Atheism

Here we may add a few words on the prevalence of atheism (in the sense of disbelief in the existence of a creator God) in ancient India. It is of course true that "For the Hindus, a system of philosophy is an insight, a darśana. To know God is to become divine, free from any outside influence". It is also true that belief in the existence of God was and is deeply rooted in the Hindu mind. But it is also true that atheism played quite an important role, though it was never so popular as some scholars such as Debiprasad Chattopadhyaya and N.N. Bhattacharya have tried to prove.2 The earlier exponents of the Nyāya and Vaiśeshika schools excluded God from their systems. According to the earlier Sāmkhya the belief in the existence of God is unnecessary and unproved. God as the creator of world had no room in the philosophical system of the Jainas and the early Buddhists also. Similarly the Chārvākas, as seen above, believed that the world is a spontaneous growth promoted by the chancecombination of material elements and that no intervention of God is needed in creation. Thus, quite a big portion of the ancient Indian people was atheist.

Radhakrishnan, S., Ind. Phil., I, p. 41.

²Chattopadhyaya, Debiprasad, Indian Atheism; Bhattacharya, N.N., History of Indian Cosmogonical Ideas; 'The Role of Atheism in Indian Thought', Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 57 ff.

Chapter 3

Epic-Pauranika Pantheon and Avataravada

Transformation of the Vedic Pantheon

In the later sections of the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$. (i.e. the first part of the Bālakāṇḍa and the whole of the Utrarakāṇḍa), the later portions of the Mbh. and the Purāṇas we find a pantheon which grew out of but was, in many ways, different from the Vedic Pantheon.

This epic-Paurāṇika pantheon is the pantheon of modern India. In the centuries preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ we have signs of a new religious consciousness which converted the ancient Vedic-Brāhmaṇical religion into present-day Hinduism. The introduction of sectarian religion based on the worship of personal gods in place of the Vedic-Brāhmaṇical community-worship is the main symptom of this change. The object and mode of worship, priestly hierarchy, purpose of worship, all were transformed; but the most evident change is found in gods and goddesses and their nature because in order to become personal gods able to fulfil new desires they had to acquire new personalities. Those gods who did not change, gradually lost their status and popularity, yielding their place to deities of comparatively late origin such as Durgā, Kāli, Gaṇeśa, Kārttikeya, Lakshmī, Kāma, etc. around whom there grew rich and complex rituals and myths.

The Vedic Aryans were worshippers of the deified natural forces which were theoretically grouped in equal numbers under three categories, each headed by a deity of special character and significance. These thirty-three divinities (eleven terrestrial, eleven atmospheric and eleven celestial)¹ may be regarded as the nucleus

¹For a detailed study of the classification of the early Vedic gods, cf. the first volume of the present work, RHAI, I, Ch. 3.

of the epic-Paurāņika pantheon.1 Their names and classification however varied considerably even in the Vedic texts.2 Brhadāraņyaka Upanishad,3 for example, though retains the number thirty-three to denote the total number of divinities, yet it regroups them into eight Vasus, twelve Adityas, eleven Rudras, Indra and Prajāpati while the Aitareya Brāhmaņa substitutes Indra by Vashatkāra. In the Rāmā, also though the total number of these deities stands at thirty-three, yet Indra (or Vashatkāra) and Prajāpati are substituted by the Asvinikumāras.

Rise of the Triad of Brahmā, Vishņu and Śiva

According to the Brhadaranyaka the eleven Rudras were the guardian-deities of the ten sense-organs and mind. Similarly, the twelve months of the year are said to be symbolic of the twelve Ādityas without any specific reference to the months special to each one of them. In course of time however the Adityas, who included both Indra and Vishņu, gradually lost importance, except Vishņu. The Vasus were absorbed into Agni, and the latter came to be transformed into Rudras. The Rudras were also ultimately absorbed into Rudra-Šiva. Similarly Vedic Prajāpati was assimilated into Brahmā. Thus the early Rgvedic gods, who held prominent positions, lost their significance and some of them, such as Aśvins and Ushā became almost completely extinct and some, like Indra, Agni, Yama, Varuna and Vāyu subsisted only as minor functionaries—as the Digpālas. In the transformed pantheon the most eminent position was occupied by Vishnu (once a mere accomplice and associate of Indra in latter's exploits against the asuras) and Rudra-Siva (once regarded as a minor malevolent deity) and Brahmā (who in the early Vedic age was nowhere in the picture). These three, specially

¹Cf. J.P. Singhal, 'Rgvedika aura Paurānika Devataon kā Antara', Vishveshvaranand Indological Journal, I, 1963, pp. 57-62. He rightly points out that the Vedic gods were immortal because they were regarded as natural forces, while the Paurānika gods became immortal because they drank nectar after the Samudramanthana. Further the number of the Vedic gods is 33 while the Pauranika gods are 33 crores.

²Tiwari, Arya Ramachandra G., 'Evolution of the Brāhmanical Pantheon', Aruna Bhāratī, Prof. A.L. Jani Felicitation Volume, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, p. 9 ff.

^aBrh. Upa., Gita Press ed., p. 787 (Vasava ekādaša Rudrādvādaša-Ādiyāsta ekatrimsadindraschaiva Prajāpatischa trayastrimsāviti).

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the first two, shot themselves into such great prominence that all other deities were thrown into second rate, even third rate, positions. In the personality of these three were now co-ordinated the three cosmic principles of creation, preservation and destruction. Thus was borne the triad or trinity of the Indian pantheon recognised by the Epics and the Purāṇas. The Mbh. has anecdotes to relate how these three gods act in unison to perform deeds of cosmic significance. Sometimes Siva is shown as born of Brahmā, or vice versa. At other times Vishṇu is created by Brahmā or vice versa. In some stories Siva and Vishnu pay homage to each other, both to Brahmā and Brahmā to each and to both. Thus no clear line of demarcation is drawn to separate their stations or functions. But the invocation of these three gods in times of crises proves that they were regarded as having a status more exalted than that of the other gods.

The triad of Brahmā, Vishņu and Šiva is more clearly recognized in the Puranas. There are numerous passages in these works which show them as in charge of the three cosmic functions. Thus in the Kūrma P. Vishņu says: "Brahmā creates, I preserve, and Śiva destorys". The Vishnu P. states: "The Creator creates His own self (in creation), Vishnu preserves and in the end the Ender anihilates". In the Matsya P. we read: 'Brahmā creates all living beings and inanimate matter; Vishnu preserves them and bestows growth on them; at the end of an aeon Rudra destroys creation". The three gods are distinguished by the spiritual attributes which are peculiar to them. According to the Vayu P. Rajas, the creative active principle, inheres in Brahmā; Sattva, the unattached passive attribute, belongs to Vishnu; and Tamas, the dark and fierce attribute, inheres in Siva. In the Mārkandeya Vishņu is told by Siva "Know thyself as Prakrti and me as Siva, the Purusha: Thou art half my body, so am I Thine".3

Incompatibility of Vishnu and Siva

However as pointed out by Sukmari Bhattacharji, there is something conceptually irreconcilable between Vishņu and Šiva. These two fundamentally symbolize two contrary principles—the solar and lunar. Even in ritualistic details, this incompatibility

¹Bhattacharji, S., op. cit., p. 356. It was nothing but henotheism of the RV in the epic-Paurānika garb.

²Ibid., p. 358 f.

^{*}Ibid., p. 357.

may be noticed. 'Bilva' leaves are sacred to Siva and taboo to certain sections of the Vaishnavas. Tulasī leaves are similary sacred to the Vaishnavas (they are Rādhā, Kṛshna's lover in leaf-form, known also as Vishņupriyā) and are taboo to the Śāktas. Dūrvā grass is offered without the inner shoot to Siva and the Manes; and with the inner shoot to Vishņu and the solar deities. The Śālagrāma and Sivalinga are mutually exclusive taboos to the two sects. 'Yantras' are metal plaques with intricate diagrams and formulas, but without figures worshipped by the Saktas; 'Pattas' are such plaques with figures of Vishnu and his ten incarnations worshipped by the Vaishnavas.1 Even the cultic practices of the Vaishnavas and Saivas are opposed to each other. The Nārada Pāñcharātra Samhitā says, "by the Tantrikas who practise magic Siva should be worshipped with fierce vows, with corpses, fuel, cow-dung and ashes". Hari, on the other hand, is fond of worship offered with purity. The pūjā of Vishņu has more aesthetically pleasing votive offerings than that of Siva. According to the Padma P. the Salagrāma, the symbol of Vishņu, should not be touched by women and the Sūdras, while the Sivalinga may be touched by all.2

Fundamental Unity of Godhead

However, time softened much of the sharp edge of this rivalry and each sect in its attempt to elevate its god to the supreme status felt obliged to incorporate some traits of the rival sect's god. Much in this field was done by the notion of the fundamental unity of Godhead and the idea that its division is merely functional. the Upanishads Brahman is regarded as free of gunas; the illusory functions of creation, preservation and destruction attributed to Him are actually performed when he becomes Isvara through the illusory superimposition of the attributes. This idea was not given up by the Puranas and the fundamental unity or oneness of the three was clearly recognised. The Vāyu P. states: "As Brahmā he creates the creatures, as Kāla he destroys them, as Purusha he remains indifferent—these are the three stages of Prajāpati". Or as the Mārkandeya P. states, the one Self-create Kāla performs the three tasks in three (forms): creates the creatures, kindly preserves

¹Ibid., p. 355.

²Idid.

and destroys them (too). The Kūrma P. also says: "three are (His) forms, the cause of creation, preservation and destruction; the Sattva-self is the Lord Vishņu who ever stabilizes creation; Brahmā the Rajas-self creates and Hara the Tāmasa destroys". In Vaishņavism Vishņu is said to be the essence behind these manifestations, while in the Saiva Purāṇas and Tantras all this is attributed to Siva (and in the Sākta Purāṇas to Sakti or Devī).²

Thus in these three gods, Brahmā, Vishņu and Šiva, sometimes regarded as the menifestation of One, we have a trinity of the truly 'high gods' of India, the gods of the orthodox religion. All the other gods are shown as reducible to these three, the lunar gods were reduced to Siva, the solar gods to Vishņu, and the creator-gods to Brahmā.

Minor Gods and Goddesses

Besides consolidating the image of the major sectarian gods, the Purāṇas also introduce many minor gods as distinct epiphanies of these two. Thus we have Kārttikeya, Gaṇapati, Kubera, Durgā, Kāma and Kāla in the Śiva group and Lakshmī and the several incarnations of Vishṇu in the Vishṇu group. In Vaishṇavism specially Rāma and Kṛshṇa came to be identified with Vishṇu and thus got themselves elevated to the supreme position. In this process Brahmā was for all practical purposes eliminated from the scene through coalescence into Agni, leaving Vishṇu and Rudra-Śiva in the field.

The large number of goddesses which loom large on the Later Vedic, Epic and Paurāṇika horizons both in Vaishṇavism and Śaivism are the progeny of the non-Aryan female deities first witnessed on the pre-Vedic Indus Valley seals.³ Since then the adoration of Śakti (Supreme Energy) conceived anthropomorphically as a female deity was continuously popular.⁴ Belief in the several forms of Pārvatī, Sarasvatī, Lakshmī and a host of several other goddesses both in Śaivism and Vaishṇavism is attributable only to the influence of

¹Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 358.

²Tiwari, Arya Ramachandra G. 'Evolution of the Brāhmanical Pantheon', Aruna Bhāratī, Prof. A. L. Jani Felicitation Volume, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, p. 13.

Tiwari, A.R.G., op. cit., p. 9 ff.

⁴Cf. Ch. 2 of the RHAI.

this tradition. In the resurgence of these mother-goddesses in the epic-Paurāṇika religion as the Mātṛkās the various aspects of the fundamental feminine divinity assume new dimensions. Thus Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaishṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Chāmuṇdā are the expressions of the changed needs of the times when goddesses largely replaced their consorts in rituals.

In the epic-Pauranika religion innumerable minor and local gods were also recognised as village deities, tutelary gods and goddesses of specific regions (like cremation grounds, temples, mounds), disease-goddesses, fierce spirits, tree or animal spirits, ancestor-spirits, sanctuary spirits and local spirits. Worship of trees like pipal was revived. The practice of the worship of all these minor deities was already there, for it is a timeless and world-wide phenomenon; only it was pushed into the background in the Vedic religion for some centuries. But the ethical miscegenation and cultural commingling of the Aryans with the earlier races of India, discussed in the first volume of this work (Ch. 5), now led to their re-emergence.

Thus in the epic-Paurānika religion while, on the one hand, we have a great triad with cosmic functions of the first magnitude and the truly 'high' appeal to the imagination and intellect, on the other we have innumerable deities of 'lower' category which dominate the popular imagination and fill the hiatus between an intellectual minority and the vast illiterate majority. It is true that the various regional and functional deities, the 'low-gods', are sought to be explained as manifestations of the 'high gods', but their actual worshippers never bothered themselves with this exposition; they believe in it unconsciously, as an underlying samskāra of their psyche.¹

The multiplication and proliferation of gods and goddesses is explained in as early a text as the *Brhadāraṇyaka Upanishad*. According to this work when Brahman, being alone, found Itself incapable of any action, It created a number of divinities of the Kshatriya (warrior) category, viz. Indra, Varuṇa, Soma, Rudra, Medhā, Mṛtyu, Tśāna, etc. When It did not feel satisfied, It created another batch of deities of the Vaiśya category viz. Rudras, Ādityas, Viśvedevas, Maruts, etc. who were called the gaṇas, i.e.

¹Cf. S. Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 361 f.

gods who were members of one or another particular group (gana). Lastly, still, feeling dissatisfied, It created Püshan who belonged to the Sudra category. The Aitareya Brahmana attributes the origin of gods to the spilled out seed of Prajapati during his attempt at incest with his daughter Ushā.1

Role of epic-Pauranika Pantheon in the Emotional Unification of the Country

The phenomenon of the epic-Paurāņika religion, specially its pantheon, is truly amazing. Here we have all the known elements of all the stages of a religion from the primitive to the most advanced ancestor-worship (in srāddha, piņdapitryajña and Yama-worship), worship of spirits (Dākinīs, Šākinīs, Piśāchas, Yakshas, Gandharvas, and Kinnaras), worship of cosmic elements (in Agni, Sūrya, Soma Ushā, Vāyu, Dyaus and Pṛthivī), of mother-goddess (Pṛthivī, Aditi, Durgā, Kāli and Ambikā), of culture-heroes (Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa, Pradyumna, Aniruddha, Sāmba, etc.), of the dwarf (Vāmana) and the child (the boy Kṛshṇa), theriolatry (Hanumat, Saramā matsya, tortoise, Siva's bull, Pārvatī's lion, other cultic birds or beasts surviving as mounts such as the swan of Brahmā and Sarasvatī, the peacock of Kärttikeya, the elephant of Indra, Garuda of Vishnu, the mouse of Ganesa, the buffalo connected with Yama, etc.), ophiolatry (in Vāsuki and Ananta), tree-worship (in the sanctity of the banyan, bilva and pīpala trees and the tulasī plant) and stoneworship (in the Salagrama, the stone emblem of Vishņu, and the Sivalinga of Siva). Then in the final stage there is absolute monism of Vedanta (with Brahman as the only Reality). The fundamental catholicity of epic-Paurānika religion denies nothing and tolerates every level or phase of religious consciousness. It helped its followers to bring under one umbrella the various sects and creeds and provide a conceptual unification to the country.2 Even though the sectarian followers of some of these deities clashed with one another or each other at some local levels as the Pauranika stories avow, these were mere aberrations in the prolonged intercultural dialogue while on the broad national level there continued to exist remarkable religious harmony and social amity. As pointed out by Tiwari,3

Tiwari, op. cit., p. 14 f.

²Bhattacharji, S., op. cit., p. 363.

⁸Tiwari, op. cit., p. 20.

the temple complexes of Chittor, Ekalingji. Nāgadā (near Ekalingji), Purī, etc. in North India and of Ellora, Bādāmī, Belur, Halebid, Hampi, Śrīrangam (near Tiruchirapalli), Jambukeśvara (near Śrīrangam), Rameśvaram, etc., in the southern part of the country provide a visual testimony of the actual cultural-cum-emotional unity of the epic-Paurānika religion. In several of these temples the main deity may be Śaivaite or Vaishnavite but the gods and goddesses of other sects are also given an honoured place. The images found in these shrines are, as if, the cultural emissaries of the remote racio-cultural units signing on behalf of their respective followers.

Avatāravāda: its Meaning

The most important aspect of the epic-Paurānika pantheon is the doctrine of avatāra. The term avatāra, usually translated as 'incarnation' in English, is applied to the act of a divine or supernatural being in assuming the form of a man or an animal and continuing to live in that form upon earth for some time for the fulfilment of the particular objective for which that form is assumed. An avatāra is thus distinguished from transmigration in which the transmigrating entity is not a deity but a soul; from 'possession' in which a spirit takes up abode in a human body temporarily and not for the whole life; from 'emanation' which implies a divine source but not the actual presence of the deity; from the different manifestations of a deity which may co-exist with each other; and from the capacity of deities or holy men to assume on occasions whatever form they please.1 Among Western people the idea of incarnation seems to have originated in Egypt and then, with Hellenism as its medium,2 to have reached its highest form in Christianity3 and heterodox Islam4 though it should always be kept in mind that the Christian concept of resurrection being a solitary exception and

¹Sönderblom, N., in ERE, 7, p. 183.

²Cf. George Stock, in ERE, 7, p. 192 f.

³Plott, John C., A Philosophy of Devotion, Delhi, 1974, p. 508.

The Shi ite doctrine that the right of succession to Mohammad belongs to the descendants of Ali, the prophet's cousin, and of Fatima, his daughter, implied, among other things, that they, by virtue of their blood relationship, inherit a divine light-substance (ERE, 7, p. 183; G. A. Barton, ibid., p. 197 f.).

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something unique did not have all the elements of the epic-Paurāṇika avarāravāda according to which there have been many incarnations of the Deity and there may be many more in the future.¹

The term avatāra is derived from the root avtr (to descend, to come down). It is not used in early works. The Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. use such words as janman (birth), sambhava (coming into being), srjana (creation), and prādurbhāva (appearance) for expressing the idea of incarnation. As pointed out by Suvira Jaiswal the Vishņudharmottara (with the exception of the interpolated passages) nowhere uses the word avatāra and the Harivamśa describes the incarnations of Vishņu as his prādurbhāvas. However, later on the term avatāra became the more popular one.

Popularity of Avatāravāda in India

The doctrine of avatāra is a fundamental one in Hinduism. a distinctive feature of Vaishnavism; we shall discuss its role and the various avatāras of Vishņu in the chapters on Vaishņavism. Here we propose to investigate its origin, general nature, design and significance because though of special significance in Vaishnavism, it has been quite popular in other Indian religions and sects. The Buddhists, for example, made the Buddha pass through many avatāras before he attained Buddhahood. To illustrate his former births they appropriated the ancient folk tales and represented them in the form of the Jataka stories. The idea was further developed in Mahayana Buddhism which believes in the incarnation of the bodhisattvas who after the state of the maranabhava (being in the dying state) pass through the state of antarabhava (being in the intermediary state) before entering upapattibhava (state of being reborn; conception). The bodhisattvas do not incarnate in the same way as the other human beings are reborn: they know beforehand where and in whose womb they are to reborn and enter the womb knowing that they are entering it. The Pratyekabuddhas, while remaining in the womb know in addition that they are there and the Buddhas leave the womb in full consciousness of what they are doing.2 The acceptance of the doctrine of avatara in Buddhism was probably the result of impact of Brāhmaņism on it, though

¹Kane, P.V., HD, V, ii, p. 992.

²Poussin, L. De La Vallée, in ERE, 7, p. 187 f.

Suvira Jaiswal holds a contrary view; for as we will see below, the doctrine had emerged, in incipient form atleast, long before the advent of Buddhism.

The Jainas also had their theory of incarnation. They believed that the avatāras always come in opposed pairs, as Nārāyaṇa and Prati-Nārāyaṇa, Balabhadra and Prati-Balabhadra, the former of the pair representing the force of good and latter the force of evil, as Rāma and Rāvaṇa. Each requires the other for its svarūpa siddhi—self-manifestation. The more intense the opposition of the two, clearer the definition of each.¹

In the epic-Paurāṇika Hinduism, apart from Vaishṇavism avatāravāda is specially recognised in Śāktism; in most other sects it finds recognition but plays a comparatively minor role. As pointed out by H. Jacobi most of the various forms under which Śiva is adored as Rudra, Bhava, Mahākāla, Ardhanārīśvara, etc. are not his avatāras because unlike the avatāras of Vishņu they are not limited and successive manifestations of the deity; they coexist with each other. However, his avatāras such as Lakulīśa are also known.

Antiquity of Avatāravāda

The germs of the doctrine of avatāra and the stories of the various avatāras have been traced to the religious beliefs of the prehistoric races.² So far as the Vedic Aryans are concerned, it has been pointed out that a Rgvedic passage refers to Vishņu as having assumed another form in battle, and Gonda has reminded that in the RV Indra is said to roam about in several forms.³ It may also be pointed out that the Nirukta speeks of some deities who are said to have both human and non-human forms. It may be that these ideas contributed to the concrete formulation of the incarnation theory, but its origin and references to the root-ideas of some of the well-known avatāras—Kūrma, Mastya, Vāmana, Varāha, Kṛshṇa, etc.—can hardly be placed before the Brāhmaṇa and the Upanishadic texts (cf. the stories of Manu and Fish, Kūrma, Varāha and Vāmana in the Satapatha Brāhmaṇa and of Devakīputra

¹Bhagwan Das, Krishna: A Study in the Theory of Avataras, Bombay, 1962, p. 6.

²RHAI, I, Ch. 1.

⁸Gonda, J., Aspects of Early Visnuism, Delhi, 1969, p. 124.

Krshna in the Chhandogya Upanishad) specially because the belief in avatāravāda could come into existence only after the wide acceptance of the theory of rebirth or samsāravāda which, as we have seen, began to become popular in the Vedic society for the first time in the Later Vedic Age.1 There are only two major differences between the doctrine of avatara and the theory of rebirth. Firstly, an avatāra is of the Divine Spirit or Over-Soul (conceived variously as Vishnu, Siva, Sakti, Adi Buddha, etc.) while rebirth is of an individual soul. And secondly, the Divine Spirit incarnates itself to redeem men and creation, while a man is reborn because of his karmans or deeds. It may however be noted that the doctrine of avatara is sometimes related with the theory of karman. The stories of the curses (sapas) laid upon the high gods, usually by the rshis, in accordance with which these gods take birth as greater or lesser avatāras, are clearly intended to show that while the avatāras adjust the good and bad karmans of others, in the process they expiate their own evil karmans also. Similarly, the avatāras of evil exhaust by their self-willed bad deeds the virtues and stores of merit they accumulate in their earlier births by severe penances. The ten-headed Rāvaņa won the golden city of Lanka formerly belonging to Kubera by the sacrifice of his own heads in the course of his tapas lasting for 'thousands of years', but exhausted his thus acquired merits by his evil deeds.

Avatāravāda in its Classical Form

Though the idea that gods may and do assume animal or human form was known earlier, but the doctrine of avatāra of the epic-Paurāṇika religion is something different. In the words of Prof. G.C. Pande, "The incarnation or avatāra is not a casual but a historical manifestation of God. God incarnates Himself in the human race in an age of moral crisis in order to set right the balance of right and wrong. Although ever unborn and unchangeable, the lord of all beings, He takes birth controlling His power of Nature as a divine mystery. But his incarnation in history is not unique. He is born in every age when virtue declines and evil flourishes to protect the virtuous and destroy the evil-doers and establish the moral order. His human birth and career are divine

miracles which all men are not really able to comprehend. In fact, 'fools may despise God in human form' but those who recognise Him are saved". In the Durgāsaptasatī of the Mārkandeya P. the Mother-Goddess declares: "Thus Whenever (yadā yadā) trouble will arise caused by the Danavas, (bādha Dānavotthā bhavishyati) at each such time (ta lā tadā) I shall become incarnate (avatīryāham) and accomplish the foes destruction (karishyāmyarisamkshayam)"2. But the locus classicus for the descent of God in different forms is found in the Bhagavadgītā. In it Lord Kṛshṇa assures humanity through Arjuna thus: "O Bhārata (=Arjuna), whenever (yadā yadā) there is decline of righteousness (dharmasya glanirbhavati) and unrighteousness is in the ascendant (abhyutthānamadharmasya) then (tadā) I create Myself (Ātmānam srjāmyaham). For the protection of the virtuous (paritrānāya sādhūnām) and destruction of evildoers (vināśāya cha dushkriām) and for the establishment of righteousness' (dharma samsthāpanārthāya) I am born from age to age (sambhavāmi yuge yuge)".3 Further, "Though unborn (aja) and immortal (avyaya) and also the lord of all beings (bhutānāmīśvarah), I manifest (sambhavāmi) Myself through My own Māyā (ātmamāyayā) keeping my Prakṛti under control".4 The various Puranas and the Epics echo these ideas at various places. quote only the Bhāgavata P. (X. 14.20): "O Birthless Lord of All, Thy births among the gods, rshis, men, animals and ocean forms, are all intended for one purpose of punishing the wicked and fostering the good".

The Gītā uses another term vibhūti to convey an idea somewhat similar to avatāra. Sri Aurobindo differentiates between the conceptions of vibhūti and avatāra. He compares the Gītā conception of vibhūti with European conception of superman. According to him the supermen or vibhūtis are 'above morality, and ordinarily without conscience, acting according to their own nature'. Aurobindo considers Rāvaṇa to be a vibhūti comparable to Napoleon. On the other hand, avatāras are 'representative cosmic men who have been divine instruments for establishing certain essential elements in the process of terrestrial historical

¹Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 126.

²Mārkandeya P., trans. by F.E. Pargiter, 1969, p. 518.

^{*}Gītā, IV.7-8.

⁴Ibid., IV. 6.

evolution. They open the way for humanity to a higher consciousness. The avatāras are not bound to do extraordinary actions, but they give their actions a meaning and import.¹

Divine Spirit vis-a-vis Its Avatāra

The doctrine of avatara tacitly assumes the superiority of the original Divine Spirit or Over-Soul (in the case of Vaishnavism of Vishņu, in the case of Buddhism of the Adi Buddha or the Dharmakāya of the Buddha and in the case of Sāktism, of the Supreme Mother Principle) over the incarnated deity. Bhagavan Das explains this relationship thus: when a mosquito stings a man, his vitality or life-force becomes concentrated in hands which at once try to brush-off the mosquito. Similarly when there is lawlessness in a section of society, the forces of lawfulness (government, public opinion, or group-soul) make concerted efforts to counteract it. The principle of collective counteraction against evil by the whole life-force of an individual or society may be called Divine-Spirit at the cosmic level.2 It is given various names in different religions and The Vāyu Purāna states: "This Mahān-Buddhi, the Principle of Universal Intelligence, Cosmic Consciousness which exists in all beings and in which all things exist, which is therefore known as sam-vit-this Principle has many names Manas, Mati, Brahma, Puh, Khyāti, Īśvara, Prajñā, Chit, Smṛti, Vipura, etc.".3 In the Bhāgavata P. it is called "the sead-store, the Principle, in the Nature of Self, from which all avatāras come" (Sarveshāmavatārānām nidhānam bījamavyayam).4

Kalāvatāras, Amsāvatāras and Prati-Avatāras

Thus according to the avatāra doctrine the great incarnations are the manifestations of the Over-Soul which puts forth its powers of good and devotion to high ideals. But apart from them minor

¹Varma, V.P., Political Philosophy of Sri Aurobindo, Bombay, 1924, p. 421 f. Cf. Nikam, N.A., 'Avatāra: The Descent of the Divine,' Aryan Path, XXXVII, No. 11, 1966, pp. 499-502.

Bhagavan Das, op. cit., p. 10 f.

³Ibid., p. 11.

^{&#}x27;Ibid., p. 12.

manifestations of the Divine called amsāvatāras or kalāvatāras also take place, sometimes to resolve a minor crisis and sometimes to help the main avatara. For example, in the Durgāsaptašatī, the Supreme Mother is helped by the various amsāvatāras though it is also said that all of them were really her manifestations. In the Rāmā. Brahmā exhorts gods to beget sons with nymphs and demi-goddesses, who as monkeys and bears, will be the helpers of Rāma in his war againt Rāvaņa. Thus Hanumāna is said to have been the son of Vāyu, Bāli of Indra, Sugrīva of Sūrya, etc. In the Mbh, on the other hand, all the heroes are declared to be the partial incarnations of gods, demi-gods, saints and demons-Bhīma of Vāyu, Arjuna of Indra, Karņa of Sūrya, Yudhishthira Sahadeva of Aśvins, Śiśupāla of of Dharma, Nakula and Rāvaņa, etc. In some cases conflicting traditions are recorded. Arjuna, for example, in usually said to have been the son of Indra. Therefore he is called Indra's avatāra in the Harivamsa. But in the Mbh. he is also described as the avatāra of Nara in his association with Kṛshṇa, the avatāra of Nārāyaṇa. Similarly Balarāma and Lakshmana are described at some places as the incarnations of Vishņu and elsewhere of the snake-god Sesha.

This confusion has been the result of the belief that usually avatāras and anti-avatāras come in groups, companies or vyūhas of associates, friends and enemies. The Epics and the Purāṇas describe the previous births and deeds of many of their main characters and the role they played in the world-drama. Thus it is said that Rāma, devotedly served by his younger brother Lakshmaṇa, became Kṛṣhṇa and his former anuja Lakshmaṇa became his elder brother Balarāma. The two other brothers of Rāma, namely Bharata and Satrughna, were born as Pradyumna and Aniruddha, respectively the son and grandson of Kṛṣhṇa. In such a view it was natural to believe that Rāvaṇa, who in a previous birth had appeared as Hiraṇyakaśipu to be killed by the Nṛṣimha avatāra of Vishṇu, was born as Śiśupāla to be killed by Kṛṣhṇa.

The doctrine of the avatāras of gods and demons together may appear strange but only till we recall that in the epic-Paurānika legends Devas and Daityas are all regarded as cousins (sons of Aditi and Diti sisters) or even 'step brothers'. According to another tradition just as Rāma and Kṛshṇa were the avatāras of Vishṇu so Rāvaṇa, Kaṁsa, etc. were the avatāras of Vishṇu's

pārshadas (angel-attendants) who had fallen into evil ways. Philosophically also the Bhāgavata P. (III. 2.15) declares that both good and evil are forms of one life.1

Importance of Avatāravāda

The doctrine of avatara has influenced the history of Indian religion and thought tremendously. From the emotional point of view it has always been comfortable for an ordinary Indian to believe that when adharma will increase, God would come down to earth to set things right. This belief has become deep-rooted in Indian psychology. From the historical point of view the doctrine has been greatly helpful in bringing about a unity in diversity in religious thought. Because of this doctrine different sects worshipping numerous animal deities (such as kūrma, varāha, matsya, etc.) as well as deified human heroes (such as Rāma, Vāsudeva, Paraśurāma, etc.) could be brought under the umbrella of one great ideology, in this case Vaishnavism. The doctrine played a similar role in other Hindu sects. For example, in Saktism it made it possible to believe that the various goddesses are the manifestations of the same Supreme Mother Principle.

According to some scholars the concept of the non-human avatāras - the Fish, Boar, Man-Lion, Dwarf, etc. represents Paurānika allegories of the stages of psycho-physical evolutionequatic, reptilian, mammalian, lion, anthropoid and human.2 But it is nothing more than the desire to trace modern concepts in ancient texts. However, the avatara doctrine, connected as it is with the theory of yugas and manvantaras may profitably be analysed to understand the ancient Hindu view of history.

In modern times many persons pose or are made to pose as avatāras by their admirers or followers which is a gross misuse of a great doctrine. Sometimes when a local saint of a popular shrine is worshipped for a long time, legends grow which declare him an avatāra of some god or rshi. But most Hindus do not believe that great men like Śańkarāchārya, Nanak, Shivaji or Gandhi are born again as avatāras in times of crisis.

¹Bhagavan Das, op. cit., p. 16.

²¹bid., p. 8f.

In popular tales a hero or heroine is sometimes described as an avatāra of a minor god, gandharva, vidyādhara, etc. temporarily born as a human being because of a curse of some higher god. It is no more than a popular use of this doctrine as a literary motif.

Chapter 4

Bhakti and Pauranika Rituals

Antiquity of Sectarianism

The epic-Paurānika religion is characterised by the existence of a number of theistic sects, the votaries of which worship a particular divinity as the Supreme God or Goddess. Thus for the Vaishnavas Vishnu is the Supreme Deity and for the Saivas Siva is the Greatest The personal approach of their worshippers is marked by intense devotion for (bhakti) and absolute surrender to (prapatti) their object of worship (ishta devatā). It is believed that sectarian theism made its appearance in the post-Upanishadic period, though some scholars trace its existence in some comparatively later 'ancient' or 'Vedic' Upanishads. D.C. Sircar has however very plausibly suggested that "sectarianism of some sort was the characterstic of the religious life of India even before the advent the Aryans some of whom had gradually adopted it before the latest hymns of the Rgveda were composed." According to him the concept of bhakti explained as exceptional attachment, "may be regarded as an un-Aryan concept gradually adopted by the mixed Aryo-Nonaryan population of the country because the religiouslife of the Rgvedic Aryans is known to have been primarily dominated by the sacrificial cult having a different basis and approach".2 In this connection Sircar has drawn attention of scholars to the following facts:

(1) The kneeling human figures with hands uplifted in prayer on the either side of a god usually regarded as Proto-Siva on two Mohenjodaro seals may suggest the existence of a kind of sectarian devotees of the proto-type of Rudra-Siva in the Indus Valley Civilization. (2) The Apri hymns of the RV refer to the goddess Bharatī, regarded as the personified divine protective power of the

¹Sircar, D.C., 'Antiquity of the Bhakti Cult', The Bhakti Cult and Ancient Indian Geography (BCAIG), Calcutta, 1970, p. 41.

²¹bid., p. 36.

Bharata people. It means that goddess Bharati was at first exclusively worshipped by the Bharatas and was their tutelary deity, the concept of which is analogous to that of a sectarian divinity. (3) The name Bhāratī reminds us of those of Kauśikī and Kātyāyanī which Banerjea explains as the aspects of the Mother Goddess originally worshipped by the sages of the Kuśika and Kātya gotras.1 (4) The germs of Vaishnavism as a sectarian religion are traceable in the RV since of the three padas of Vishnu the highest is described in this work as known to Himself and visible only to Sūris (Tad-Vishnoh paramam padam sadā pasyanti sūrayah divīva chakshurātatam)2 who must have been the persons favoured by God Vishņu and remind us of the name Sūri applied to the sectarian devotees of Vishnu in the later work like the Padma Tantra. Rgvedic poets also pray that they may go, after death, to the blessed abode of Vishnu which is the highest station beyond ordinary mortal ken. It reminds one of the later Vaishnava conception of Vishnuloka as the supreme goal of spiritual aspiration.3 Though Banerjea has expressed doubts about this interpretation,4 yet when all the points raised by D.C. Sircar are taken into consideration, latter's supposition that some sort of sectarianism existed in the pre-Upanishadic, nay even in the pre-Vedic age, seems to be quite valid. (5) In a couple of stanzas of the RV (I.156.2-3) the poets refer to the recitation or singing (bravat or vivaktana) of respectively the birth and names of Vishnu,5 while another stanza (VII. 100.5) alludes to the praising of Vishnu's name. It suggests that a mythology around the birth of Vishņu was already developing and his devotees recited his name which reminds one of the later practice of nāma-japa or nāma-sankīrtana of the god. (6) The later works often refer to list of śāta-nāma or sahasra-nāma of Vishņu and Kṛshṇa. That such lists existed in the age of the later Samhitās is clearly proved by the Satarudriya section of the YV and expression sahasra-nāman occurring in the AV. The Satarudrīya of YV, containing a hundred names of Rudra shows that a section of his

¹Banerjea, *PTR*, p. 119.

²RV, I.22.20.

³AIU, p. 431, and n.

⁴PTR, p. 19.

⁵The words bravat and vivaktana have been interpreted by Sāyaņa as 'sankirtana' or 'recitation'.

devotees attached great importance to the recitation of their god's name. It is quite likely that the Munis in the Keśī sūkta of the RV. whose description reminds us of the later day Pāśupatas, sang the Satarudrīva incorporated in the YV. (7) The existence of Rudra as some sort of a sectarian god is noticed in the Śvetāśvatara Upa. which describes him as Maheśvara (Great God) among gods (īśvaras), and as the one who created the god Brahmā and presented the Vedas to the latter (VI. 7-8).1

Meaning and Origin of Bhakti: Bhakti in the Early Vedic Age

Perhaps the greatest single characteristics which differentiates the Vedic from the epic-Pauranika religion is the great importance attached to and the part played by bhakti in the latter. The bhakti movement is generally regarded a medieval phenomenon, but as the means of spiritual life bhakti had acquired considerable importance in the Pauranika age and had become one of the important features of the post-Vedic religious thought. As we will see its germs have been traced even in the Vedic and pre-Vedic religious tradition.

In literature bhakti is regarded as one of the nine rasas. Śāṇḍilya defines bhakti as sa parānuratirīśvare.2 Svapaneśvara explains it as 'a particular state of mind having the Supreme Lord as its object.3 The $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ also employs the word $pr\bar{\imath}ti$ and the Vishnu P. the word anuraga for the same idea.4 It implies a code of conduct and mode of worship (āchāra and pūjā). The three main senses of the root bhaj from which the word 'bhakti' has been derived (resorting to, serving and sharing)5 correspond to the three stages of the development of

¹Susmita Pande (Birth of Bhakti in Indian Religions and Art, pp. 11-12) closely follows the arguments of D.C. Sircar enumerated above.

²Athāto bhaktijijñāsā. Sā parānuraktirīśvare. 1.1.1-2.

³Kane, P.V., HD, V, ii, p. 958, n. 1152a.

⁴ Ibid.

⁶ According to Grierson bhakti has primary meaning of 'adoration'. Bothlingk and Roth give the following different meanings of its root bhaj: (1) to distribute, apportion; (2) to equip, furnish, go (3) to receive, maintain, etc. According to Monier-Williams the meanings of the root bhaj are to enjoy, partake of, to pursue, to choose, to serve, to adore, etc. Suvira Jaiswal (The Origin and Development of Vaişnavism, Delhi, 1967, p. 37 f.) gives a materialistic interpretation of bhakti. She opines that the terms bhagavat, bhakti and bhakta are intrinsically related with each other and that bhagavat originally denoted (Contd.)

bhakti, respectively implying the notion of a personal relationship between god and man, a mode of worship and the sharing by devotee in the *līlā* of god.¹

As noticed above, according to D.C. Sircar bhakti was an un-Aryan concept gradually adopted by the mixed Aryo-non-Aryan population of the country. It could not have been a prominent feature of the Vedic religion because the religion of the Revedic Aryans was dominated by the cult of sacrifice. However, without negating this hypothesis he has also drawn attention to the possibility that some sort of devotional sectarianism existed in the Early and Middle Vedic periods (supra). Many other scholars including P.V. Kane and V.S. Agrawala have accepted this possibility.²

The word 'bhakti' is found in a mantra of the RV (VIII.27.11) in which bhakti to the Viśvadeva gods is mentioned: Idā vāmasya bhaktaye. Here the seer has possibly used the word bhaktaye in the sense of theistic devotion. According to the A.C. Chakravarti, the fact that RV knew the existence of some sort of bhakti is proved by the use of the terms bhakta (devotee) and abhakta (nondevotee) in RV I. 127.5. The word bhajāmahe (that is 'we worship') occurs in the Vishņusūkta (I.156.3) probably in devotional sense.³ According to a number of modern scholars also the emotion of bhakti was known in the Vedic age. Hopkins has opined that bhakti is already evident in the Rgveda.⁴ Radhakrishnan also feels

primitive tribal group which owned all tribal wealth, bhakti meant a share thereof, and bhakta an individual who had received such a share. In course of time bhagavat came to be regarded as a god, and bhakta, who was a member of the tribe, came to be looked upon as belonging to him and as his devotee. Such subjective interpretations, which go against known facts and the entire tradition of the country and seek to prove the correctness of a particular historical point of view with the help of unproved assumptions, need no comments. For the semantic development of the root bhaj see Bhattacharya, Suddhibhushan, 'Linguistic Background of the Word Bhakti', in BCAIG, p. 67-73. Cf. also ERE, 2, p. 539; Hiriyanna, M., Popular Essays on Indian Philosophy, p. 96; Ramanujam, B.V., 'Evolution of the Concept of Bhakti', BCAIG, p. 74 ff.; Vyas, R.N., The Bhāgvata Bhakti Cult, Delhi, 1977, Ch. 1.

¹Pande, S., op. cit., p. 2.

²Kane, HD, V, ii p. 950 ff.; Agrawala, V.S., 'Bhakti Cult in Ancient India', BCAIG, p. 11 ff.

³Chakravarti, A.C., 'Bhakti Cult', BCAIG, pp. 49-66.

Hopkins, E.W., Ethics of India, p. 8.

that "if bhakti means faith in a personal god, love for him, dedication of everything to his service and the attainment of moksa or freedom by personal devotion, surely we have all these elements in Varuna worship." Elaborating this idea, Susmita Pande, a recent writer on the subject, states that nearly all the elements necessary for bhakti may be gleaned from the Vedas. "The presence of elements such as the sense of wonder, justice, grace and helpfulness in the gods, the corelation of grace and faith, repentance, confession, forgiveness of sin, the sense of communion with the deity and his omnipresence and immanance, have surprised scholars who regard the Vedic religion as essentially polytheistic and animistic in character and have led others like Macnicol admit that it is not necessary to suppose that bhakti which is essentially associated with a theistic faith always follows an independent line of development of its own, or that it arose in entire According to Munshi Ram independence from the Vedas."2 Sharma³ also all the six constituents of prapatti enumerated in the Ahirbudhnya samhitā and the Lakshmītantra samhitā namely, to do what is correct (anukūlasya samkalpaḥ) avoiding sin (pratikūlasya varjanam), having faith that Lord will help (rakshishyatītiviśvāsaḥ) and protect (goptrtvavaranam), complete surrender to God (ātmanikshepa) and humility (kārpaņya) are found in the Vedic hymns.4

Though the Vedic literature is traditionally interpreted in terms of karmakāṇḍa and jñānakāṇḍa⁵ yet, as pointed out by Kane,⁶ Rgvedic gods were also conceived as having personal relationship with the worshipper which took various forms—that of a parent, friend, saviour, Lord, and even wife. In the RV we find all types of prayers which show devotion—prayers of petition, prayers of

¹Indian Philosophy, I, p. 108.

²Op. cit., p. 8.

²Sharma, Munshi Ram, *Bhakti kâ Vikāsa* (in Hindi), Varanasi, 1958, pp. 149-54; cf. also Macnicol, *Indian Theism*, p. 10; Raychaudhuri, *EHVS*, p. 18; De, S.K., *BSOS*, VI, p. 668; Mrinal Dasgupta, *IHQ*, VI, pp. 319, 326.

⁴M.R. Sharma (op. cit., p. 150 ff.) has given detailed references to the Vedic hymns in which these elements are found. He has traced many other sentiments such as mānamarshana, bhayadarśana, bhartsanā, pāpasmarana, paśchātāpa, tanmayatā etc. associated with bhakti in the RV (ibid., pp. 154-63).

^{*}Cf. Śańkara's Preface to his tīkā on the Gītā.

⁶Kane, op. cit., p. 952.

glorification, prayers of silence. Some of the Rgvedic mantras are full of loving faith in God, particularly some of those addressed to Varuna and Indra. According to RV I.103.4 Indra is a name that is to be chanted aloud. "All my thoughts (or hymns) praise Indra in unison, seeking light, longing for him,.....they (thoughts) embrace him (Indra), the divine giver of gifts"; "your friendship (with your devotee) is indestructible (everlasting); to him who desires a cow, you become a cow, to him who longs for a horse, may you be a horse." "O Indra, you are far better (or richer) than my father or my brother." Indra is even said to have assumed the form of a wife for the sake of a devotee. Some mantras addressed to Varuna also show the same kind of bhaktibhāva. It is also remarkable that in the Rgveda there is a verse (RV, VI. 51.8) in which there is an apotheosis of 'namas' (namaskāra, adoration or homage) which is described as upholding the heaven and the earth.

Bhakti and Prapatti in the Middle and Later Vedic Age

The post Rgvedic period was dominated by increasing ritualism as a result of which gods tended to loose their splendour and power and became tools in the hands of the priests⁴ But this development also helped in the rise of Vishnu and Rudra (Rudra being comparatively free of the ritualistic religion). Further, it created a reaction among the masses and liberated the human mind from externality, conventions and primitive anthropomorphism. This development also increased the tendency towards metaphysical speculation, strengthened monotheism and prepared the ground for the emergence of clearer concepts of personal god and devotion. As we have discussed in the first volume of the present work, a progress from polytheism to monotheism is seen in the Brhadāranyaka Upa. where in answer to the repeated questions of Vidagdha Sākalya regarding the number of gods Yājñavalkya gradually reduces the number of gods from three thousand and three to one.⁵

¹Pande, S., op. cit., p. 10 f.

²Kane, op. cit., p. 950.

³ Ibid., p. 952.

⁴RHAI, I, p. 74 ff. According to M.R. Sharma many elements of bhakti are found even in the Brāhmanas (op. cit., pp. 195-219). In the AV (VI.79.3) we find the epithet bhaktivānisah for those who were devoted to the cult of bhakti (Agrawala, BCAIG p. 11).

⁵RHAI, I, p. 121.

However it is in the Svetāsvatara Upa. that the concept of personal god becomes prominent. This Upanishad advocates the doctrine of a truine unity. For it Rudra is the one Supreme God and there is no place for the second (Eko hi Rudro na dvitīyāya). He is the source and origin of gods, the ruler of all, and the creator of the golden germ (hiranyagarbha).

Though the term 'bhakti' is not found in the earliest principal Upanishads,1 yet the doctrine that it is God's grace alone that saves the devotee is found in the Katha and Mundaka Upanishads, which declare that the Supreme Soul is attained not by expositions (of a teacher) nor by intelligence, nor by much learning; He is attained by him alone whom the Supreme Soul favours, to whom the Supreme Soul discloses His form." In the Praśna Upa. Pippalāda recommends the practice of austerity, chastity and faith. In the Kena Upa. Vāyu, Agni and Indra obtain knowledge through the grace of Uma.3 One may also detect the devotional impulse in the heart of Nārada when in the Chhāndogya he implores Sanatkumāra to initiate him into spiritual wisdom. The Upanishadic concept of Upāsanā is nothing but one-pointed devotion of thought towards a particular object and implies that the person who contemplates has supreme adoration and fondness for the object he contemplates.4 That is why in the Kena Brahman is called the object of all desires, and the various Upanishads describe Him as the source of bliss and happiness. R.G. Bhandarkar also thinks that the origin of the bhakti doctrine may be traced to the Upanishadic idea of Upāsanā which magnifies what is meditated upon and represents it in glorious form in order to excite admiration and love. He also draws attention to the Brhadaranyaka passage which conceives the Atman as dearer than the son, wealth and everything.5 The result of the Upanishadic Upāsanā is not

¹Cf. Vyas, R.N., The Bhagavata Bhaki Cult, p. 27 ff.

²Katha, 2.22.; Mundaka, III.2.3.

^aM.R. Sharma traces the various other elements of bhakti in different Upanishads (op. cit., pp. 220-32).

According to Hiriyanna in so far as Upāsanā includes śravana, manana and dhyāna, it may be said to contain the germs of later day bhakti (Essentials of Indian Philosophy, p. 26). Radhakrishnan (Ind. Phil., I. p. 525) also affirms that bhakti is a direct development of the upāsanā of the Upanishads.

Bhandarkar, R.G., Collected Works, IV, p. 39.

cold knowledge but mystical realization of the Absolute which is full of bliss, love and happiness involving a fair degree of devotion. As Macnicol¹ admits, the difference between the devotional theism of the Upanishads and the passionate theism of Bhagavatism is the difference of degree only. Even the advaitist interpretation of the Upanishads does not negate bhakti because according to Sankara Brahman is the impersonal aspect of God and God is the personal aspect of Brahman.2

The earliest unmistakable reference to bhakti as a cult occurs in the Śvetāśvatara Upa. where devabhakti and gurubhakti are mentioned together (VI. 23). Here the word bhakti is used in the same sense in which it is used in the Gītā. "These matters declared (here)", it states, "reveal themselves to that high-souled person who has the highest faith (bhakti) in God, and the same faith in his guru as in God". It advocates the doctrine of bhakti in IV. 18 also: "I, desirous of moksha, surrender (prapadye) myself as my refuge (saranam) to that God who in former times created Brahmā, who transmitted to him (Brahmā) the Vedas and who illuminates the intellect of the individual soul."

According to P.V. Kane3 the word 'prapadye' used in the Śvetāśvatara served as the basis of the doctrine of prapatti in the later Vaishnavite bhakti system. Prapatti (absolute self-surrender to God) is distinguished from bhakti in the works of the Rāmānuja and of other Vaishnava schools but the Gītā makes no such distinction explicitly. In Gītā II.7 Arjuna uses the word prapanna (who has surrendered himself for salvation) for himself. The final advice at the end of the $G\bar{\iota}\iota\bar{a}$ (XVIII. 65-66) enjoins what is called prapatti in later works: "On me fix your mind, become my devotee, sacrifice to me, offer adoration to me; you will certainly reach me; I declare to you truly, you are dear to me. Giving up all duties (dharmas) come to me as your (only) refuge; I shall release you from all sins; do not grieve".4 The theory of bhakti propounded in the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ and other works is that bhakti leads to grace of God (prasāda) which enables the bhakta to attain salvation (moksha). In the Vishņu P. Prahlāda is told by God: "as

¹Macnicol, op. cit., p. 49 ff.

²Aiyer, M.K. Venkataram, 'Bhakti from the Advaitic Standpoint,' Vedanta Kasarī, LII, No. 11, 1966, pp. 477-83.

³Kane, op. cit., p. 952.

⁴Cf. also Gītā, IX.34.

your mind is firmly (nischalam) and devotedly (bhaktisamanvitam) fixed on me you will by my favour (matprasadena) attain the highest bliss (nirvāṇam)".

Evidence of Pāṇini

According to most scholars the earliest known use of the term bhakti as theistic devotion is found in Yaska and Panini. Yaska uses the words Indrabhaktini and Angibhaktini for the bhakti of Indra and Agni. According to Pāṇini the name ending datta (as in Varunadatta) denoted a benediction from a god (VI. 2.148) of which the personal name becomes a symbolic expression. Some scholars find an early reference to the bhakti doctrine in the rule of the Ashṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini (fifth centvry B.C.) for the formation of the words 'Vasudevaka' and 'Arjunaka' respectively in the senses of 'a person whose object of bhakti is Vasudeva² and a person whose object of bhakti is Arjuna'. As Vāsudeva was undoubtedly regarded as the supreme god in the days of the Gitā and the Besnagar inscription (second century B.C.), Raychaudhuri may be right in his contention that the word bhakti, in regard to Vāsudeva is used in the above sūtra by Pāṇini in the sense of religious adoration, though the word is also used in the Ashtadhyayi with reference to cakes, and according to some the possibility of its meaning being 'fondness' cannot altogether be precluded.3 The

¹Cf. Chakravarti, A.C., 'Bhakti Cult', BCAIG, p. 49.

²Kaiyata describes Vāsudeva as Paramātmā-devatā Višesha.

³U.C. Bhattacharjee (IHQ, I, 1925, pp. 483-99) does not believe that the Pāṇini sūtra IV.3.98 (Vāsudev-Ārjunābhyām vuñ) refers to the bhakti of Vāsudeva and Arjuna. Allan Dahlquist follows him (MIR, p. 23 ff.). But the objections raised by Bhattacharjee are adequately met by P. Bannerjee (JBRS, XL, 1954, pp. 74-79) and J.N. Banerjea (Religion in Art and Archaeology, p. 3 and n. 1). The heading of sutra IV.3.98 is found in IV.3.95. It reads Bhaktih and applies to all the sūtras from IV.3.96 to 100 which refer to things like cakes and milk-products in 96, Mahārāja in 97, all the Kshatriya and Gotra names like Nakula in 99 and all the countries and Kshtriyas in 100. Therefore, Bhattacharjee argues, here the term bhakti only means anurakti or 'a preference for' and not 'devotion' (cf. also Sircar, AIU, p. 432, n. 2). But if Vasudeva and Arjuna were only Kshatriya heroes, the sūtra IV.3.99 would also have served their purpose. As later explained by Patanjali, separate sutra for them was formed because they were also the Divine Ones (tatrabhavatah). Grierson Raychaudhuri and Bhandarkar accept this interpretation. The placing of the (Contd.)

reference to two groups of persons as Vāsudeva-bhakta and Kamsa-bhakta in the Mahābhāshya also is not regarded by some as quite clear. However, the idea of religious adoratian for a leader of thought was not unknown in the days of Aśoka (middle of third century B.C.). It is indicated by the Rummindei pillar inscription, according to which the Buddhist king went in person to and offered worship at the birth place of Buddha, styled as Bhagavat. Attention may also be drawn in this connection to the installation of the Buddha's relics for worship mentioned in the early Buddhist literature as well as in inscriptions belonging to the time of Aśoka and king Menander (middle of the 2nd century B.C.), to the implications of bhakti in the reference to religious adoration in the verses of the Therīgāthā, to the representation of some cult deities of the Brāhmanical pantheon on the pre-Christian coins of India, etc.¹

Emergence of Bhakti Cults

According to V.S. Agrawala² the germs of the Bhakti seem to have found a fertile ground in the obscure religious cults known as maha or vrata mentioned in the ancient Jaina and Buddhist literature. In the Nāyādhammakahā and Rāyapasenīya sutta a number of mahas such as Inda maha, Khanda maha, Jakkha maha, Girimaha, Bhūta maha, Vessavana maha, Nāga maha, Chetiya maha, Rukkha maha, Sāgara maha, Siva maha, etc. are mentioned. Such deities of the Bhakti cult are also found mentioned in the Niddesa commentary of the Sutta Nipāta and the Milindapañho. The Niddesa passage refers not only to Vāsudeva, Baladeva, and the Ājīvakas,

name of Vāsudeva before Arjuna in the dvandva compound Vāsudev-Ārjuna shows that Vāsudeva was a more honoured deity than Arjuna. The Mbh. (V. 49.19) preserves a tradition that Arjuna was the incarnation of an ancient deity Nara, as Vāsudeva was of Nārāyaṇa (cf. Banerjea, Purānic and Tāntric Religion, p. 22). Barth also believed in the prevalence of Arjuna worship (The Religions of India, London, 1881, p. 172, n. 2). The word 'Vāsudevaka' may be compared with the word 'Gotamaka', 'a follower of Gautama' (Rhys Davids, Buddhist India, p. 145). Patañjali alludes to the Vārttika on Pāṇini sūtra IV.2 104 and names the followers of Akrūra and Vāsudeva. While commenting on the sūtra alpāch taram (II.2 34) he refers to the temples of Rāma (Sankarshaṇa) and Keśava (Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva).

¹In the Milindapañho we have mention of Vasudevavratika which seems to be the same as 'Vasudevaka' of Pāṇini.

*Agrawala, V.S., 'Bhakti Cult in Ancient India', BCAIG, pp. 11-23; see also his Prāchīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma.

Niganthas, Jatilas, etc., but also the followers of Nāgas, Supannas, Yakkhas, Agni, Manibhadda, Punnabhadda, Asuras, Gandhabbas, Mahārājas, Chanda, Sūrīya, Inda, Brahmā, Deva, cows, dogs, crows etc. As remarked by J.N. Banerjea² this is a curious assortment by a follower of Buddhism in which believers in Ājīvikism, Jainism and Vāsudeva worship are grouped with the devotees of crows, dogs, etc.

Bnakti in the Epics

The doctrine of bhakti is found in considerably developed form in the two Epics. It is generally believed that the Balakanda and Uttarakānda, which treat Rāma as divine, an avatāra of Vishņu, and preach his bhakti, were later interpolations in the Rāmāyaṇa, but seeds of avatāravāda and Rāma bhakti may be found in the other Kāṇḍas also. In the beginning of the Ayodhyākaṇḍa (I.7) Rāma is considered as an avatāra, though Bulcke regards the first thirty-five verses of the first chapter of this Kanda as interpolated. In the incident of Sabarī Rāma's divinity becomes quite explicit. It is said that Sabarī went to akshayaloka by his prasāda. In the Sundarakānda, Hanumāna gives hints of the semi-divine character of Rāma. In the Yuddhakānda Sugrīva tells Vibhīshana that Rāma and Lakshmana are seated on Garuda. At the time of the agniparīkshā of Sītā, gods pray to Rāma and describe him as the very form of Vishņu and identify Sītā with Lakshmī. Rāma is considered as Rudra, Nārāyana and Parabrahma. As regards bhakti, the word is used in the Rāmā. in sense of loyalty towards elders, husband, etc. also. In the Sundarakanda Hanumana's bhakti for Rāma becomes quite clear. Thus Rāma's avatārahood and his bhakti were known to the authors of the original Rāmā, unless all these portions are regarded as interpolated. In the Balakanda and the Uttarakānda both these elements develop further. In the chapter on Putreshti sacrifice of Dasaratha Brahma suggests that Vishnu take the form of a mortal (Rāma) to kill Rāvana. In the Uttarakāņda Rāma is described as an avatāra in several chapters viz. 8, 17, 27,

¹All the four Lokapālas including Vaiśravaņa are called Mahārāja in early Buddhist literature, but not usually in the Brāhmaņa literature. Pāṇini also states that Mahārāja was a devatā to whom oblations were offered. According to to Patañjali bali offered to Mahārāja was called mahārāja bali.

Banerjea, J.N., PTR, p. 11.

30, 51, 76, 98, 104, 106, 111, 137 etc. Sītā is also usually described as of mysterious origin, an ayonijā. When she enters the earth and Rāma becomes angry on the latter, Brahmā asks Rāma not to forget that he is Vishņu and Sītā is Lakshmī. The character of Hanumāna as an ideal bhakta also develops in this Kāṇḍa.

The Mbh. contributes to the development of bhakti in three ways: by its narratives of the deeds of Krshna, through the Gītā which contains the gospel of bhakti and through some other sections especially the Nārāyanīya, which give expression to the ideas and sentiments of bhakti.2 As we will discuss in the chapter on Bhagavatism, the character of Krshna in the Mbh. is multi-dimensional—he is a politician, a philosopher, an ascetic, a king, a man with known parentage and yet regarded as unborn, a mortal who is immortal, all rolled into one. He is worshipped as incarnation of Vishnu. He and Arjuna are described as Nara and Nārāyaņa. In the Aranyaparvan Krshna is described as a great ascetic who performed auterities on the Gandamadana mountain. He is said to have been Vishņu and Trivikrama. According to V.S. Agrawala some of these descriptions show a Pancharatra influence.3 bhakti is clearly preached at a number of places. When Draupadī is divested of her robes in the Kaurava court, and on another occasion faces the prospect of a curse of angry Durvasa, she prays to Hari as an ārta bhakta.

Bhakti in the Nārāyanīya Section

The most important of the Mbh. portions on bhakti are the Nārāyanīya section of the Śantiparvan and the Bhagavadgītā. In the Nārāyanīya section Nārada goes to Nara and Nārāyana and asks them whom they worship. They tell him that they worship the Paramātman from whom everything has originated. On their advise Nārada goes to the Śvetadvīpa where he comes to know about the devotees who were fair-complexioned, wore white garments and took only that food which was free of violence. They were engrossed in mānasa japa, were aware of ekānta bhāva, remained celibate, worshipped Nārāyana and created the Tantra śāstra. Then Nārada learnt the story of Vasu Uparichara's

¹Pande, S., op. cit., p. 40.

²Ibid. p. 42 f.

³Agrawala, V.S., Bhārata Sāvitrī, p. 181.

sacrifice in which Brhaspati could not have the vision of God as his mind was given to violence, and Ekata, Dvita and Trita, the sons of Brahmā, and other sages could not realize Him because they practised self-mortificatory penances. Vasu Uparichara was the only one to realize Him because he practised neither violence and nor bodily penances, but devoted himself to ekāntika bhakti. When Nārada returned to Nārāyaṇa, the latter found that ekāntika bhakti had germinated in the former. Nārada then had a vision of Višvarūpa of God—almost a replica of the Višvarūpa described in the Gītā.

Bhakti in the Gitā

In the Gītā the Upanishadic ascent towards God is matched by the descent of God, that is His incarnation, among men (see Ch. 3). He assumes a form and humanity, though He is unborn, infinite and the transcendent Lord of all creatures. With this humanization of God bhakti comes into its own within a personal relationship between man and God¹. That is why it is the human form (mānusham rūpam) which Arjuna prefers to the cosmic form (viśvamūrti)². In the seventh chapter of the Gītā Vāsudeva Kṛṣhṇa declares that there is only one God Vāsudeva in the universe; other devatās are only His forms. He further says that whatever form any devotee with faith wishes to worship, He makes that form steady. But the Gītā is "categorical in affirming that the worship of the personal God is superior to the contemplation of the impersonal absolute".³

However, there is a great difference between the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ and the Nārāyaṇīya section. In the former, though the Supreme Soul is called Vāsudeva (VII. 19) the doctrine of the four vyūhas, which is the characteristic feature of the Nārāyaṇīya section, is totally absent. The names of Sankarshaṇa, Pradyumna and Airuddha do not occur in the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$; even the name of Nārāyaṇa does not occur in it. In the opinion of Kane the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is the older of the two, as it propounds the general doctrine of bhakti, while the Pāñcha rātra doctrine of the Nārāyaṇiya is only one of the several bhakti

¹Pande, S., op. cit., p. 53.

²Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 126.

BIbid.

schools.¹ Besides, as we have seen, the worship of Vāsudeva is older than Pāṇini, for Pāṇini teaches the formation of the word 'Vāsudevaka' meaning one whose object of worship is Vāsudeva'. We will dicuss this problem in greater detail in the chapter on Bhāgavatism (Ch. 7).

Three mārgas (paths) are spoken of in the Gītā viz. karmamārga, bhaktimārga and jūānamārga. In the path of knowledge (or avyaktopasanā) it is not bare book knowledge of Nirguņa Brahman as the Supreme Soul that leads to salvation. For that purpose what is required is the Brāhmīsthiti (state of identifying one self with Brahman). This condition can be secured only with great effort. In the path of bhakti the bhakta resigns himself to God's grace (prasāda) and whatever he does he consigns to Vāsudeva (sanguņa and vyakta). In Chapter 9 the path of bhakti is described as the chief among vidyās (lores) and chief among mysteries. It is the best means of sanctification; it can be directly apprehended; it is in accordance with dharma, imperishable. According to the Gītā, the bhakti mārga is easier than the jūāna mārga.²

In the seventh Chapter Kṛshṇa classifies bhaktas into four categories namely ārta (in distress), jijñāsu (seakers of knowledge), arthārathī (seakers of worldly riches) and jñānī (men of wisdom), and explicitly favours the jñānī bhakta who is ever in constant union with the Divine and whose devotion is single-minded. He is ekabhakta; for him only Vāsudeva is everywhere. In Chapter IX bhaktas are divided into two categories—sakāma and nishkāma. Sakāma bhaktas attain heaven but come down to earth after their merits are exhausted, while the nishkāma bhaktas attain what they have not viz. the Lord's form. For them faith must be unwavering (avyabhichāriṇī) and total (ananya).

The ancient Indians had a great liking for classifications, divisions and sub-divisions. In the Padma P. bhakti is divided into laukikī (of the common people), vaidīkī (laid down by the Vedas) and ādhyatmikī (philosophical) (V. 15.164), or as mānasī (mental) vāchikī (verbal) and kāyikī (done with the body, such as fasts and vratas) (V. 15. 165-168). In the Bhāgavata it is classified into sāttviki rājasī and tāmasī (III. 29. 7-10) and into uttamā (best) madhyamā (middling) and kanishṭhā (inferior) (III.34. 38-41).

¹Kane, HD, V,ii, p. 962.

²¹bid., p. 965.

³Pande, S., op. cit., p. 60.

According to the Bhāgavata P. however bhakti is nine-fold viz. śravana (hearing about Vishnu) kirtana (repeating his name), smarana (remembering him), padasevana (worshipping the feet of the image of Vishņu), archana (offering pūjā), vandana (bowing or paying homage) dāsya (treating oneself as the slave of Vishņu), sakhya (treating Him as a friend) and atmanivedana (surrendering one's soul to Him). According to Nārada's Bhaktisūtra bhakti is eleven-fold - guņamāhātmayāsakti, rūpāsakti, pūjāsakti, smarāņāskti, dāsyāskti, vatsālyāskti, kāntāsakti, ātmanivedanāsakti, tanmayātāskti, parama virhāsakti and sakhyāsakti. It is not to be supposed that all these nine or eleven methods have to be practised at the same time. According to Sāṇdilyasūtra a devotee practising any one of these may win God's favour and attain moksha. The Vishnu P. says that remembering Krshna is superior to all prayaschittas. The Gītā does not expressly enumerate all these nine or eleven modes of bhakti, but most of them can be gathered from its various passages.1 For example, Arjuna's bhakti is 'sakhya-bhakti'. The Gītā however regards the performance of the duties of his station in life by a bhakia as the best form of worship (archana or pūja), far superior to the worship by offering flowers or by reciting the name of God.

Here we may recapitulate the main aspects of the doctrine of bhakti of the Gītā discussed in the preceding pages. From our discussion it is obvious that bhakti in the Gītā is distinguished by (i) a sharp focus on Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa as the God parexcellence; (ii) an emphasis on the doctrine of incarnation of the Deity for the protection of dharma and destruction of adharma; (iii) the theory of casting all actions on Vāsudeva by the devotee; (iv) a belief in the

¹For example, listening to the Lord's names is mentioned in XIII.25; to the singing of his glory, that is kīrtana in IX.4; constant rememberance, that is smaraṇa in X.9; pādasevana in XI 44; pūjā and archana in IX.26; vandana in XI.36-46; sakhyabhāva in XI.41 and ātmanivedana in IX 32 and XVIII.56, 62, 66, etc. According to A.L. Basham (The Wonder that was India, p. 330), the divine grace in the Gītā is "The condescension of a mighty potentate, stern and functional" and his glory is "the glory of an emperor" which an ordinary human being can hardly think of. Suvira Jaiswal (The Origin and Development of Vaiṣ ṇavism, p. 113) thinks that the Gītā sought to emphasize the relationship of master and slave between the Deity and the devotee because after the break up of tribal solidarity the society was being reorganised on the basis of varņa dharma for the success of which a religion based on faith and devotion was required.

efficacy of the simple acts of devotion; (v) universality of the doctrine as the gospel of salvation irrespective of the distinctions of caste, creed and even gravity of one's sins; (vi) possibility of a direct vision of God by the devotee; (vii) variety of relationship between God and devotees-father and son, friend and friend, lover and beloved, etc ; (ix) doctrine of śaraṇāgati by the devotee, matched by (x) the promise of redemption by the Lord.

Here it is significant to note that the Gītā does not explicitly refer to image worship, for Gītā IX. 26 may be regarded as referring to religious symbols and not images. It also does not refer to the role of guru. In the later ages both these features became prominent in the bhakti sects. Many features of the bhakti of the Gita mentioned above also underwent significant changes. example, the worship of other gods and goddesses became more important that it is indicated in the Gītā. Kṛshṇabhakti itself underwent tremendous changes. The doctrine of avatāra was elaborated both in terms of the number of avatāras and in terms of motivation—now it was emphasized that God incarnates himself not only for the impersonal restoration of dharma, but also to fulfil the needs of individual devotees. With the passage of time bhakti ceased to be a simple affair, so much so that Śrīdhara mentionts eightyone forms of minor bhakti from which one graduates to the higher one. The lover-beloved relationship of God and the devotee was also carried far beyond, and made much more erotic, than the author of the Gītā could probably imagine.1

Bhakti in the Pāñcharātra System

The doctrine of bhakti was developed by the followers of the, Pañcharātra system also. We will discuss the problems connected with the origin, development, philosophy, literature, etc. of the Pārcharātra system in Chapter 6. Here it is sufficient to say that the first clear reference to Pancharatra is found in the Satapatha Brāhmana (XIII.6.1) which says that Purusha Nārāyaņa conceived the idea of the pāñcharātrasattra for obtaining supremacy over all beings and becoming all beings. In another

¹Sharma, Arvind, 'The Bhagavadgītā and Later Bhaktic Developments,' Mahāmahopādhyāya Dr. Gopinātha Kavirāja Commemoration Volume, Allahabad, 1976, pp. 53-61.

chapter of this text (XII.3.4) it is described how by sacrifice Nārāyaṇa became the whole world. Later on, Nārāyaṇa was identified with Vishṇu and Vāsudeva and their identity became an important doctrine of Vaishṇavism. Their identification is first found mentioned in the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka (X.1). By the time the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. was composed the Pāncharātra had become a devotional system for, as we have noted above, in this work Nārada meets Nara and Nārāyaṇa and goes to the Śvetadvīpa where he sees white people who worshipped Nārāyaṇa, created the Tantraśāstra and were engrossed in ekāntika bhakti and mānasa japa.

An important aspect of the Pancharatra system is the doctrine that there are five-fold manifestations of the Lord-para (highest form), vyūha, vibhava (avatāras or incarnations), archā (images, in which He condescends to live to help his devotees in devotion) and antaryami (Lord's manifestation in the hearts of the people). The vyūha theory arose out of the deification of the several Vṛshṇi heroes (vīras). Like avatāras the vyūhas also act as spritual guides and are, therefore, also objects of devotion. The doctrines of grace and prapatti, and the theory that initiation through a teacher (guru) is a prerequisite for grace play an important part in the Pāncharātra devotion.1 According to the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā (14. 34-41) as soon as the Lord's grace descends on the devotee he becomes eligible for moksha. The Lakshmi Tantra (17.49, 59) says that there are four ways to attain moksha—karman, sāmkhya, yoga and śaraṇāgati. The last, that is the path of self-surrender, also called nyāsa, is generally regarded as the best of all. The Gitā (XVIII. 62, 66; II.7) also advocates it. The Ahirbudhnya Samhitā ((37.31) explains it as the prayer by the devotee to the Lord that he is abode of all sins, that he is without any help and that he depends only on Him for moksha. As noted above, it describes (37.27-29) six form of śaranāgati—anukūlasya samkalpaḥ (to do what is correct, that is to follow His ways), pratikūlas) a varjanam (avoiding sin, that avoidance of things opposed to Him), rakshishyatīti viśvāsaḥ (having faith that the Lord will protect) goptriva varanam (acceptance of Him as saviour), ātmanikshepaḥ (surrendering oneself

¹For a detailed discussion vide S.R. Bhatt, The Philosophy of Pancharatra— An Advaitic Approach, Delhi, pp. 100-2.

to Him) and kārpanyam (a sense of utter humility). According to Rāmānuja śaranāgati implies svarūpa-samarpana (an unflinching conviction that the one belongs to the Lord), phala-samarpana (an unflinching dedication of fruits of one's deeds to Him), and bhāra-samarpana (transfer to the Lord of one's own resposibility in the matters of spiritual progress).

Bhakti in the Puranas

Tracing a strictly historical evolution of the bhakti doctrine within the Puripas is an impossible task, because even in the earliest Puranas quite later additions are found, while in the Puranas which are generally regarded as late, some early material is not altogether wanting (supra, p. 32). We have already discussed the Paurānika literature and its chronology. However some additional words may here be added about the Bhagavata, which is the most important of the Puranas from the point of view of bhakti. Its composition has been variously placed prior to sixth century A.D. (B.N. Krishnamurty Sharma),3 between 550-650 A.D. (A.N. Ray),4 in the sixth century A.D. (V.S. Agrawala)5, 'not before the ninth century' (Durga Shankar Sastri)6 and in the tenth century (C.V. Vaidya).7 Whether or not it was composed in the Dravida country as Banerjea, C.V. Vaidya and A.N. Ray believe,8 is also a debatable question. The theory of its southern origin finds some support from the tradition recorded both in the Bhagavata and the Padma according to which the cult of bhakti first arose in Dravida country, prospered in Karnataka, was found at only a few places in Maharashtra and declined in the Gurjara country.9 Cn account of

¹*Ibid.*, p. 97 f.

²Pande, S., op. cit., p. 103.

³Sharma, B.N. Krishnamurty, 'The Date of the Bhāgavata Purāṇa', AB →RI, XIV, pp. 182-218.

⁴Ray, A.N., JRAS, 11, 3.

⁵Agrawala, V.S., quoted by S. Pande, op. cit., p. 142.

⁶Sastri, D.S., Bhāratīya Vidyā, II, pp. 129-39.

⁷Vaidya, C.V., 'The Date of the Bhāgavata Purāna', *JBBRAS*, I, pp. 144-58; cf. also R.C. Hazra, in *NIA*, I, pp. 522-28; Banerjea, J.N., 'Srīmad-Bhāgavat—the Place of its Origin', *IHQ*, XXVI, ii, 1951, pp. 138-43.

^{*}Banerjea, op. cit.; Ray, A.N., 'Domicile of the Author of the Bhagavat Purana', IHQ, VIII, i, 1932, pp. 49-53; contra, S. Pande, op. cit., p. 143.

[&]quot;Ibid., p. 979.

the terrible conditions, in the Kaliyuga it was broken up by heresies and remained weak for a long time, but when it reached Vṛndāvana (near Mathurā) it got a fresh start and assumed fine form. In its book XI, the *Bhāgavata* again assert that in the Kali age people are solely devoted to Nārāyaṇa only at a few places, but to the greatest extent in the Dravida country.

In the Puranas the alambana or object of bhakti are fully personal and anthropomorphic gods, and their incarnations in various forms. In their worship use of images and temples is common, emphasis is given on japa, dhyāna, tīrthayātrās, dāna. etc. and the recitation (pātha) and hearing (śravaṇa) of the sacred books is regarded as an act of devotion. Madhusudana Sarasvati in his Bhāgavadbhaktirasāyanam states that while bhakti arises from hearing the Lord's qualities, Brahmavidyā arise from listening to the Vedantika Mahavakyas. Thousands of asvamedhas and hundreds of vājapaya sacrifices, it is said, are not equal to even the 16th part of the story narrated by Suka; he who always recites a half or a quarter verse of the Bhagavata secures the merit of rajasuya and asvamedha; he who listens to the Bhāgavata at the time of death, Govinda being pleased with him confers on him Vaikuntha. Ajāmila a moral wreck, at the time of his death loudly called his youngest son named Nārāyaṇa and became free from his sins.2 Such stories gave rise to the belief that the last thought at one's death leads to a new birth appropriate to that thought (ante matih sā gatiḥ).3 Gītā VIII. 5-6 also suggests the same idea and states that a person will remember the name of God at the time of his death only if he had been so doing all his life.

The most remarkable aspect of bhakti is the concept of personal relationship between the deity and devotee. In the Purāṇas miraculous element becomes quite prominent in this relationship (as the story of Prahlāda as narrated in the Vishņu and the Bhāgavata). Vishņu and Šiva are usually said to go out of their way to protect their bhaktas. When pleased by a devotee, they grant him desired boons. In the Bhāgavata Kṛshṇa is also shown granting boons, but receiving his love from him is stressed more.

¹Padma P., VI. 189-194. It contains a lengthy eulogy of the Bhāgavata P. and of listening to its recitation for seven days (Saptāha).

²Bhāgavata P., VI.2.49.

³Kane, HD, V, ii, p. 972.

The true bhaktas have His heart in their hands. Even the Chandalas receive his grace if they are true devotees. Usually Hari, Vishnu or Nārāyana is described as more easily moved by his devotees than Siva and other gods.

In their zeal for the spread of the cult of bhakti the Puranas are sometimes guilty of gross exaggeration. The Brahma P. claims that 'men even after having committed many sins under the influence of error (or delusion), do not go to Hell, if they worship Hari who removes all sins'. The Vāmana P. opines: "what has that person got to do with many mantras (i.e. he has no use for them), who is a bhakta of Vishņu. The mantra 'namo Nārāyaṇāya' is able to accomplish all objects'. The Vāmana and the Padma Purāṇas say that one obtains the same results by repeating the names of Vishņu that he could secure by visiting all the tīrthas (sacred places) and holy shrines in the world.

The goal to be attained by a devotee is the realization of Paramatman by his single-minded devotion (ananya or ekantika bhakti). A true devotee does not care for material gains. The boon Prahlada asked for was that in all the births he might pass his faith in Achyuta remains unshaken. Dhruva was not satisfied even when he got all the worldly pleasures. In the Purāṇas devotees are shown as craving to serve the Lord, seeking His company either as His servant or friend or both at a time-that is with dásya, sakhya or mīśrita bhāva. Sometimes the devotee expresses himself as jealous even of Lakshmī because she serves the lord constantly. In pālyapālaka bhāva the devotees conceive the lord as child and themselves as mother (vātsalya rati). The lord is also regarded as a lover-the gopīs of the Bhāgavata being its best example. He is also sometimes conceived as father, or a teacher, or a saviour.

A striking development of the bhakti cult in later ages was erotic mysticism (madhurā bhakti) associated with the worship of Kṛshṇa and Rādhā in that form of Vaishṇavism which was established by Chaitanya and Vallabhāchārya. It resulted in the emergence of an erotic mysticism about Rāma and Sītā also. devotees of this cult consider themselves as brides of Rāma or the female friends of Sītā (sakhī bhāva). They are supposed to seek

¹Kane, op. cit., p. 971.

Lord Rāma's favour through Sītā, who graciously intercedes with the Lord for the devotees. Among the followers of Vallabhāchārya the guru tells the devotee to look upon him (that is the guru) as Kṛṣhṇa and upon himself or herself as Rādhikā.

Bhakti in Buddhism

Theistic religions naturally provide a fertile soil for the growth of bhakti. But it was nourished in heterodex faiths as well, which are generally regarded as atheistic. In the original Buddhism, which was rational in approach, regarded the Buddha as a superman only and subscribed to the doctrine of pratītyasamutpāda (dependent origination), it was not possible to conceive a creator Iśvara. Nevertheless early Buddhism has a notion of a superhuman saviour with compassion (karuṇā) for the suffering mankind (which to some extent corresponds to the doctrine of prasada or grace) and therefore conceded the importance of faith (saddhā) as a spiritual faculty. Consequently we find in Buddhism the full gamut of emotions and attitudes involved in bhakti -anusmrti, śaraṇāgati, bhagavānpuja, nāmasmaraņa, etc. 1 According to Hardayal the ideal of bhakti is called saddhā in the Pali Nikāyas.2 In the Hīnayāna the physical relices of the Buddha were worshipped because, as Milindapañho argues, they are like a fan by which wind may be summoned artificially even though a great wind has blown itself out (i.e. the Buddha has entered Nirvana).3 Later, some of the Hīnayāna sects showed a tendency to lift the Buddha, even during his human life, into wholly transcendental sphere. Such docetic tendencies were fully developed in Mahāyāna in which belief in the deified Buddha, Trikāyavāda and the bodhisattva doctrine became cardinal principles. We have discussed the rise of devotionalism and such other developments in Mahayana Buddhism in detail in the first volume of the present work.4 Here we only intend to recapitulate some tendencies to make this discussion on bhakti more complete.

In the Saddharmapundarīka the human existence of Gautama is but an illusion produced by him for the purposes of converting

¹Pande, S., op. cit., p. 73.

²Hardayal, The Bodhisattva Doctrine, London, 1932, p. 32.

³Pande, S., op. cit., p. 74.

⁴RHAI, I, p. 320 ff.

human beings. Herman Von-Glasenapp¹ believes that the Buddha of the Saddharmapundarika cannot be fully compared with the gods of theistic religions because firstly Sakyamuni is not said to have been the world-liberator from beginning but attained this office in time and secondly his activities are limited; he has no influence over creation, rule or continuation of the universe. He is not the father of the world but of the further Buddhas only. However, as Susmita Pande argues, even though the Buddha of the Saddharmapundarika does not have all the features of a theistic God, yet he reaches quite near this goal, for his concept evokes in his followers all the emotions connected with a highly developed stage of bhakti. He performs miracles and proclaims a very personal relationship with the devotees. Even the bodhisattvas have the same type of relationship with the laymen. Devotion to them is expressed by erecting stupas, making their images and worshipping them by offering flowers, perfumes, etc. with or without the accompaniment of music. It is claimed that even by offering a single flower can a person in course of time see kotis of Buddhas which reminds one of the declarations of the Lord Krshna in the Gītā that whosoever offers Him with love a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, He appears in person before that devotee.3 According to the Bodhicharyāvatāra of Śāntideva a bodhisattva must perform pūjā and vandanā (worship and obeisance) with flowers, fruits, jewels, etc.), śaranāgamana (taking refuge, prapatti), pāpadeśanā (confession of sin), punyānumodana (rejoicing in God), adhyeśaṇā (prayer), yāchunā (supplication), pariṇāmanā and ātmabhāvādi parityāga (declaration of altruism and self-denial) before he can entertain tho thought of Enlightenment.4 The doctrine reached its culmination in the Sukhāvatīvyūha according to which salvation can be attained through absolute faith.5

√Bhakti in Jainism

Like early Buddhism, early Jainism was also a religion of selfreliance and self-effort. Jaina religious aspirant had also to work

¹Herman Von-Glasenapp, Buddhism-a Non-Theistic Religion, London, 1970, p. 76f.

²Op. cit., p. 75.

³Gītā, IX.26.

⁴Pande, S., op. cit., p. 78 f.

⁵*Ibid.*, p. 82.

his way up by penance and austerities to free himself from the worldly bondage of karman. As in Buddhism, there was no place in Jainism also for a creator god. But later on the element of bhakti was introduced in Jainism also and devotional rituals were precribed for the worship of Jinas who were now extolled as gods, ever merciful and ever intent upon saving the three worlds by their infinite grace. The Jainas also raised Yakshas and Yakshis or Yakshinis. the attendants of the Jinas, to the status of semi-gods and goddesses. They are called the śāsanadevatās whose function is to protect the holy doctrine. In course of time Yakshinis became full-fledged goddesses. The different types of devotion recognised in Jainism are stutivandana, pratimā-pujana, nāma-smaraņa, bhajana-kīrtana, vinaya, vaiyāvṛttya, etc.³

Contribution of the Alvars and Nayanars

Till about the fifth century A.D., harmony and tolerance charaterised the relations between the different religious sects of South India. But thereafter a great change came particularly in the Tamil region—and people began to entertain fears of the whole land being converted to Jainism and Buddhism. Consequently missionary parties of the devotees of Vishņu and Siva under the leadership of gifted saints called the Āļvārs (Vaishņava) and Nāyanārs (Saiva) began to traverse the country singing, dancing and debating all their way. This great wave of religious enthusiasm attained its peak in the middle of the seventh century and had not spent itself by the middle of the ninth.⁴

The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang, who visited South India in 642 A.D., when the Hindu devational revivalism was just gathering momentum, did not notice the new movement. He regrets that

³Cf. Sogani, Kamal Chand, 'The Concept of Devotion in Jainism', Vishve-shvaranand Indological Journal, III, 1965, pp. 80-92.

⁴Sastri, N.K., A History of South India (HSI), Oxford, 1966, p. 423. D.C. Sircar (Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India, 1971, pp. 55-70; CHI, IV, p. 143 ff.) places Āļvārs roughly between the sixth and ninth centuries. He seems to be correct, for the first three Āļvārs, cannot be placed earlier than the Gupta age and all the Āļvārs appear to have flourished before Nāthamuni (10th or 11th cent. A.D.).

¹Goyal, RHAI, I, p. 178.

²Ibid., p. 180 f.

Buddhism was on the decline, but remarks repeatedly that it had yielded to Digambara Jainism. It seems that the triumph of Hindu revivalism was largely achieved in the two centuries that followed him. Public disputations usually led kings and rulers to transfer their allegiance from one creed to another, but more significant was the impact of the soul-stirring compositions of the Nāyanārs and the Āļvārs and the fact that these were set to simple popular tunes.

The Vaishnava wing of the movement was represented by twelve Alvars¹ ('divers' into the qualities of God), usually called 'the morning stars of the medieval bhakti movement,' for whom orthodox tradition gives an impossible chronology (4203-2706 B.C.). Their bhakti was certainly more intense than the bhakti advocated in the Gītā. Three of them—Poygai, Pūdam or Bhūtam and Pey are believed to have come earliest. The bhakti of these early saints is gentle simple devotion, altogether free from sectarian outlook. This fact, and their employment of the venbā metre in their songs, points to an early date for them.

The Āļvārs had before them a tradition of the Upanishads, the Gītā, the Pāñcharātra Āgamas and the Purāṇas. They synthesized all these. But they were not only speculative mystics, but had personal experience of what they themselves wrote. They were drawn from all walks of life and carried to the people a message of intense personal religion of the love of god.²

After the early Āļvārs came Tirumaļiśai, born in Chingleput district. Most probably he was an elder contemporary of Pallava Mahendravarman I. It is said that at birth he was a shapeless mass of flesh abandoned by his parents and was brought up by a Śūdra. He is said to have practised Jainism, Buddishm and Śaivism before he became a Vaishṇava. His poems show a more controversial tone than those of the first three Āļvārs, and this was quite natural in his age. He gives a more personal description of God and describes His vibhavas and vyūhas. According to him God runs after His devotees, and grants them grace if they adopt the path of śaraṇāgati.

¹Cf. Sircar, D.C., 'Early History of Vaishnavism', CHI, IV, p. 143 ff.; Murthy, H.V. Sreenivasa, 'Revival of Bhakti Movement in the Tamil Country by the Alvars', BCAIG, ed. by D.C. Sircar, pp. 82-7; Pande, S., op. cit., Ch. 7; cf. also Menon, P.K.K. 'Bhakti Exponents in Kerala', BCAIG, p. 102 ff.

Pande, S., op. cit., p. 114.

After him we might place Tirumangai, who was a petty chieftain of Ālinādu in the Tanjore district. According to legends he became a robber in order to carry off and marry the daughter of a Vaishņava of higher caste. He even changed his religion for her. He is said to have stolen a solid golden image of the Buddha from a monastery in Negapatam to pay for renovating the temple of Śrīraṅgam.¹ The clear reference to Vairamegha (Dantidurga Rāshṭrakūṭa) in his hymns place him in the middle of the eighth century.² His hymns, and they are many, are equally full of good poetry and attacks on Jainism and Buddhism. To Śaivism he shows a more friendly attitude. Also there are many resemblances in literary form and religious sentiments between Sambandar and Tirumangai.³ He sings the greatness of God by describing many epic-Paurāṇika legends and expresses his longing for His grace passionately.

To the beginning of the ninth century is assigned Periyal var, a Brahmana of Śrīvilliputtūr. He won a religious disputation in the court of the Pandya king Śrīmara Śrīvallabha (815-62). In his hymns he assumes the role of Kṛshna's parents and associates showing (vātsalya and sakhya bhāva). Renunciation for him meant renunciation of everything except the service of god.

Āṇḍaļ or Kodai (Skt. Godā), was the real or adopted daughter of Periyāļvār. In her intense devotion to Vishņu she dreamt of hermarriage with him, and described her experience in her hymns. This mystical union was the only one she knew. Her devotion shows mādhurya bhakti of the most intense form. In many ways the ardour of her devotion resembles that of the gopīs of the Bhāgavata. Her hymns make many allusions to Kṛshṇa legends.

Tiruppan, a minstrel of low caste, belonged to about the same period. He was not permitted to enter the temple of Śrīrangam and was thus the Vaishnava counterpart of Nandan⁴ (infra). About ten verses composed by him are extant.

Tondar-adip podi ("The dust of the feet of the devotees") was

¹*HSI*, p. 426.

²D.C. Sircar thinks that he was a contemporary of Sambandar who himself was a contemporary of Narasimhavarman I (630-38 A.D.).

^{*}HSI, p. 426.

^{*}Ibid., p. 427.

a Brāhmaņa from Tanjore district whose real name was Vipranārāyaņa. His intolerance of Buddhism and Jainism was great. He sang the nature of God, His beauty and His grace.

Kulaśekhara was a ruler of Kerala. He was proficient in Sanskrit and Tamil both. Among other shrines of Vishņu he sang of that at Chidambaram.

Lastly came the celebrated Nammāļvār and his pupil Madhurakavi. The former renounced the world in his thirty-fifth year to practise yoga. His hymns, the largest in number after those of Tirumangai, are regarded as embodying the deepest religious experience and philosophic thought of one of the greatest seers of the world. His disciple Madhurakavi adored his guru as god incarnate.

Later traditaion contained in the Periya Purāṇam counts sixtythree Nayanars as the most prominent leaders of the Saiva side of this revival. They laid a firm foundation of Tamil mysticism and made no distinction of caste, creed or sex in the cause of devotion. Their relation with the Saiva Agamas is somewhat similar to that of the Alvars with the Pancharatra Agamas. They included a woman from Kāraikāl Ammaiyar and a Śūdra, Nandan, from Ādanūr, besides a Pallava senāpati Siruttoņdar. But most prominent among them were the three great men whose hymns are collected together in the Devaram or Tevaram of Nambiandar Nambi. First came Tirunāvukkaraśu, or Appar, a Veļļāla by caste who renounced Jainism to become a Saiva. According to tradition he was a contemporary of Mahendravarman I Pallava and was subjected to many trials and tortures by the latter which he easily overcame by the grace of Siva. Finally, the king himself was convinced of the superiority of Saivism, and embraced it. A verse in a Trichinopoly inscription of Mahendravarman furnishes clear proof that this ruler did indeed turn to Saivism from some other creed. It must, however, be admitted that the tradition regarding the persecution of Appar by Mahendravarman I is hard to reconcile with the spirit of the Mattavilāsa prahasana composed by the latter.1 The rest of Appar's long life of 81 years was spent in tīrthāyatrās during which he met many other Nāyānārs of whom Nānasambandar was the most prominent.

¹HSI, p. 424,

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Nānasambandar was a Brāhmana of the Kaundinya gotra from Shiyāli in the Tanjore district. At that time the Pāndya country was almost completely Jaina. Nānasambandar betook himself to Madurā, foiled the conspiracies of the Jainas against him, defeated them in debate and converted the king and his subjects to Saivism. He was the purest of all the saints, with no past to regret. He may be placed in the middle of the seventh century.

Some decades after Nānasambandar came Sundaramūrtti of Nāvaļūr. He was the son of a poor Brāhmaṇa parents. Sundara's devotion to Siva was that of an intimate friend (sakhya bhakti) so that he was given the title Tambirān-Toļan ('Friend of God').

About a century later came the famous Māṇikkavāśagar. According to tradition he was a minister of a Pāṇḍyan king. Śiva, the presiding deity of Madurā, is said to have performed many miracles on account of him. Mystical writing reached its climax in his hymns.

The hymns of Sambandar, Appar and Sundara form a veritable treasure-house of religious experiences which "tells of mystical raptures and ecstasies, of moments of light when there is a vision of God and the world is transfigured in the light of his love, and of periods of gloom when all is dark and the blind seeker is filled with a sense of fear. Somewhat different and more exuberant are the outpourings of Manikkavāśagar whose confessions are more outspoken and whose devotion is more impassioned".1

Contribution of Sankara to Bhakti

An important, though less popular aspect of the Hindu revival is seen in the works of Kumārila and Šankara. They were Smārtas who worked for not any one sect in particular but for the ancient Brāhmanical religion in general. As we have seen, Šankara's philosophy of advaitism was mainly based on the Upanishads. As the doctrine of bhakti is connected with the theory of karman and worship, it was unlikely to receive serious attention from Sankara. But the Gītā, the authority of which was accepted by him, forced him to define his position vis-a vis bhakti more specifically. In his commentary on the Brahmasūtra Sankara seek to reconcile religion of worship and devotion with the religion of pure knowledge by

¹\$astri, N.K., op. cit., p. 425 f.

making a distinction between Nirguna Brahma and Saguna Brahma or Brahma and Iśvara. In the conditioned or sopādhika aspect Brahma is the same as Iśvara. This doctrine is combined by him with his interpretation of the four types of the bhaktas described in the Gītā (supra). He concludes that the last class of the bhaktas being that of the jñānīs, bhakti must be identical with jñāna. In so far as bhakti stands for the different modes of worship, sacrifice, cultivation of moral virtues etc., it is really identical with karman. The result of the karmalakshaṇā bhakti is the purification of heart—sattvaśuddhi and it culminates in śaraṇāgati. It prepares the ground for jñānalakshaṇā bhakti which is an intimate and immediate awareness of the Lord. Jñānalakshaṇā bhakti is sādhya bhakti. It is only sādhana bhakti or karmalakhaṇā bhakti that belongs to the realm of duality.¹

Contribution of Rāmānuja and other Vedāntins

The work of the poet saints of the Pāṇḍya-Pallava period, was continued in the age of the Cholas by a succession of poets and teachers of second rank. "The Tamil hymns of the last age came to be treated as equal to the Veda and were collected and arranged in canonical books. Gradually they were regularly employed in the daily worship in temples, and their authors came to be regularly worshipped as manifestations of divinity. In fact the rise of the temple to an important place in the religious and social life of the land was the direct result of the revivalist movement".²

The Saiva canon, in which these hymns also found a place, was arranged in the first instance in the reign of Chola king Rājarāja I and continuosuly added to till about the middle of the twelfth century. The Vaishnava canon, on the other hand, was given definitive shape by Nāthamuni. His grandson Yāmunāchārya was the next great name in the succession of Vaishnava āchāryas of the period. But the greatest of the Vaishnava āchāryas was undoubtedly Rāmānuja. We have already given an outline of his life and philosophy. He was strongly attracted by the teachings of the Śrīrangam school of Yāmuna and succeeded the latter as head of

¹Pande, S., op. cit., p. 172; Venkatarma, Iyer M.K., 'Bhakti from the Advaitic Standpoint,' Vedānta Kesarī, LXI, No. 11, 1966, p. 477 ff.

²Sastri, op. cit., p. 428 f.

the matha at Śrīrangam. In his lectures and writings he refuted the Māyāvāda of Śankara and tried to demonstrate that the Upanishads do not teach strict monism, and built up the philosophy of Viśishtādvaita and interpreted his idea of bhakti in its light. He was eager to spread the doctrine of bhakti among Sudras and even among the outcastes. He permitted them the privilege of entering certain important temple on one day in the year.1

According to Sankara lower bhakti is identical with karman while higher bhakti is identical with jñāna. For Rāmānuja, on the other hand, both jñāna and karman prepare the way for bhakti. In the philosophy of Rāmānuja constant remembrance of God acquires the character of vision. God is the dearest object of man's devotion; hence jñana must assume the form of bhakti (bhaktirupam jñāna) and the fusion of the two must rest in the service of God.2

A younger contemporary of Rāmānuja was Nimbārka (supra), a scholarly Bhagavata Telugu Brahmana. He spent most of his In religion he accepted the time in Vṛndāvana in North India. doctrine of surrender (prapatti) and translated it into a total devotion to Kṛshṇa and Rādhā. For him Rādhā is the eternal consort of Kṛshṇa who lives with him for ever in Goloka, the highest heaven.

The philosophic debate on bhakti ended in complete pluralism in the system of Madhva (supra). The centre of his religion is bhakti of Kṛshṇa as taught in the Bhāgavata, Rādhā having no But he revered all avatāras. Siva is also worshipped, place in it. and 'the five gods' (Panchayatana) are recognized.

The Pūjā Ritual

A significant difference which took place in the orthodox religion due to the rise and growth of bhakti was the introduction of the pūjā of symbols and idols in and out of temples. According to most Paurāņika sects no one can realize the Supreme Spirit without a concrete idea of the same, and hence it is necessary that He should be worshipped in the form of images or concrete symbols. The Parama Samhitā of the Pāncharātras emphatically directs the religious aspirant to worship God only through idols (archā).3 "He

¹HSI, p. 430.

²Pande, S., op. cit., p. 186 f. ³Cf. Bhatt, S.R., The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra, p. 102 f.

is to be worshipped only in the visible form. Except in such a form worship ought not to be conducted." The worship or prayer offered to His image is regarded as good as worship or prayer offered to Him directly. Therefore a large portion of the literature related with the various Pauranika sects consist of ritual concerning image, worship, installing of images and the ralated subjects of iconography, temple architecture, etc.

There is a difference between the Vedic yajña and Pauranika The mode of the two rituals is different, the oblations and priests are different. Animal sacrifice is still there, but the animals are not strangled to death as in Vedic times but slaughtered with a scimitar.1 Gradually the tendency not to offer animals to the deity increases and it becomes merely symbolic. Instead of twelve or sixteen priests officiating in sacrifices, in pūjā we usually have only one, sometimes with one assistant or two.2 Ordinarily there were sixteen upachāras (items of showing honour to the deity) in the procedure of pūjā (namely, āvāhana, āsana, pādya, arghya, āchamana, snāna, vastra, yajñopavīta, anulepana or gandha, pushpa, dhūpa, dīpa, naivedya, tāmbūla, dakshiņā and pradakshiņā). But some authorities increase their number to 36 or 38 or reduce it to 14, 12, 10 or 5, there being no unanimity on the question.3

It is generally supposed that the various upachāras associated with the pūjā ritual, particularly offering of pushpa, gandha, dhūpa, dīpa and naivedya were unknown in the Vedic religion and came into prominence at a very late stage as a result of the non-Aryan influence. As we noted earlier, the word $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$ is usually derived from the Dravidian word pū-cey (meaning pushpakarma) as opposed to the Vedic homa which involved paśukarma (ritual with animals). Another derivation proposed for the word pūjā is from the Dravidian word pūsu, 'to smear'. This derivation suggests that it was a ritual in which sandal paste or vermilion, representing blood, was smeared upon the symbol or image. Vāsudeva gives his approval to the pūjā ritual in the $G\bar{\iota}t\bar{a}$ (IX.26) when he says: "Whosoever with devotion offers me a leaf, a flower, a fruit or even water, that I accept—the devout gift of the

¹Bhattacharji, S., The Indian Theogony, p. 352.

³Kane, P.V., HD, V, i, pp. 34-7.

^{*}RHAI, I, p. 6.

pure minded". According to S.K. Chatterji1 this verse gave official sanction, so to say, to a non-Vedic-non-Aryan ritual when Hindu society was being given its permanent shape by the leaders of the mixed society of the Aryans and non-Aryans. However P.V. Kane² disagrees with this view. According to him the underlying conception in the Rgvedic passages, where gods are asked to accept apūpa, purodāśa, dhāna, milk, honey etc. is the same as that in volved in the offering of naivedya to the image. He has also pointed out that the word upachara in the sense of mode of showing honour is found in the Satapatha, that the Nighantu uses the verb pūjayati in the sense of worship, that the sixteen upachāras were known before the age of the Grhyasūtras, that the Nirukta mentions the word pūjayati as occurring in the Vedas, that namaskāra was known in the Vedic age as an item of worship, and that the word $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$ had already taken a secondary meaning (honour without gandha, etc.) in the age of the Dharmasutras. Kane does not agree also with the view that the word pūjā is to be derived from some Dravidian root; he feels that it could have been derived from the word pushpa itself.

Smybol and Image Worship

Before we proceed further with the mode of worship and social aspects of epic-Paurāṇika religion, let us discuss the question of the origin and antiquity of image worship in India and the allied question of the use of visual symbols. The use of symbols in any religion decidedly preceds the use of images, and continues even after the worship of images becomes popular. We shall therefore, first discuss the symbols regarded as sacred in the epic-Paurāṇika religion and then take up the problem of the antiquity of image worship.

Philosophy of Symbol and Image Worship

In the early Indian religions and art an extensive use was made of a large number of symbols and devices. It is difficult to definitely ascertain the origin of these symbols. However, there seems to be in many cases a striking resemblance between some symbols found on early indigenous art objects and coins and those appearing on the seals discovered at Mohenjodaro, Harappa and other sites of

¹CHI, 1, p. 82 f. ²Kane, HD, V, i, pp. 35-37.

the Indus Civilization. We have discussed in detail some of the symbols occurring on the Indus seals in the second chapter of the first volume of the present work. As regards the Vedic religion, although no art remains date from the Vedic period, "there can be no doubt that ideas, forms and symbols developed during this period and acted as seed and mould for the succeeding ages".1 "The Vedic vision of reality was not mediated by mentally constructed or artificial images. The notion of form or rūpa was there".2 But "although Vedic poets use images from nature as transparent expression of divine majesty and splendour, they do not conceive gods iconically... they however do use forms as symbols in what cannot be seen. Rupa is, thus, often used for a symol in the Brāhmanas. In the Upanisads, however, we can see a tendency which Buddhism carried further. Words and forms, Nāman and Rūpa are run down as merely the limitation under which manifestation takes place.....all representations contain the working of imagination.....The deceiving nature of imagination, however, has a redeeming feature. There is such a thing as a useful deception, avisamvādibrahma. The image may not represent reality but it..... may help in the course of successful action".3 The map is not the reality it represents, but it is useful for the navigator. The symbol or image "seeks to realize an imponderable idea which serves as a standard of excellence or perfection".4 The Buddha did not think much of his physical body. His followers, however, developed a veritable religion of the worship of symbols such as the Bodhi tree, the Vajrāsana, his foot-prints, the stūpa, etc. and later on, of the worship of his images. It has been argued that stupa shows a cosmic symbolism. Other symbols adopted by the Buddhists were also based on such assumed significance. In the first century A.D. emerged the worship of the Buddha image. The iconography of the Buddh image was based on the thirty-two Mahāpurusha lakshanas which were a part of the common Indian heritage about the Chakravarti. It is therefore never easy to discriminate between Brāhmaṇical, Buddhist and Jaina symbols.

¹Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 299.

² Ibid., p. 324.

³ Ibid., p. 324 f.

⁴Ibid., p. 326.

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It may however be noted that in India, iconism and aniconism existed side by side. The Buddha could be depicted by means of symbols as well as iconically, and by both at the same time, though in the earlier Buddhist art of Central India he is represented only aniconically. Similarly, Brahmanical cult deities could be worshipped iconically as well as in the form of the Salagramas, the Bāṇa-lingas and the Yantras. But here the association of deities with the symbols was not so direct though attempts were often made to account for their connection by the fabrication of mythological stories. The legends connected with the various lingas and the well-known Sakta tradition about the severed limbs of Sakti falling in different parts of India as a result of which those places came to be regarded as so many Sakti pithas may be noted in this Sometimes such iconic objects were held in greater connection. veneration than the images themselves.

Animal Symbols

The history of animal symbols in Indian religions begins with the Indus Civilization.¹ In the earliest Vedic literature gods generally assume the form of animals. In the RV the Vedic goddesses like Ushā, Pṛthivī and Aditi are symbolised as cow. The horse, the main offering in sacrificial rites was anthropomorphised as Aśvins.² The symbol of most solar deities viz. Sūrya, Savitṛ, Vivasvat, Bhaga, Pūshan and others was also horse.³ In Buddhology the horse is the symbol of renunciation.⁴ The history of tiger as a religious motif also starts with the Indus Civilization. As regards lion, in the Maurya period, Aśokan pillars surmounted by lions were erected at places like Sanchi, Sarnath, Lauriya Nandangarh, etc. In the Paurānika religion lion became the mount of Durgā.

In the RV Rudra is described as a bull. Nandin, Nandiśvara or Adhikāranandin are some of the various names by which Śiva's mount, the 'bull', came to be described in the Epics and the Purāṇas. It has been suggested by J.N. Banerjea that the bull was

¹Goyal, S.R., RHAI, I, p. 296.

²Chattopadhya, B., Coins and Icons, A Study of Myths and Symbols in Indian Numismatic Art, p. 44.

²Macdonald, A., The Vedic Mythology, p. 150.

⁴Zimmer, H., Myths and Symbols in Indian Art and Civilization, 1963, p. 162.

originally the theriomorphic form of Siva. The idea about the bull being the mount of the god appears to have originated before the first century B.C. or first century A.D.

In the Vedas the waters are called maternal (Mātṛtamaḥ). In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa a fish saves Manu from Deluge. The representation of the fish in a tank on the Punch-marked coins probably signifies the cult of fertility involving the worship of water. Apart from fish crocodile, dolphin, tortoise and snake, who are born of water, are found to be connected with the various deities. Fish and snake stand for the phallus while other water-born animals are associated with the Yakshas, Yakshinīs, Kāmadeva, Varuṇa, Gangā, etc. as their mount.

The earliest representation of makara (crocodile) is to be found on some seals at Mohenjodaro. Much later it is found on some Punch-marked coins and on the facade of the Lomaśarshi Cave of the Maurya period. In the words of E.W. Hopkins, "The only really divine water-animal in India is the crocodile". Makara is obviously a symbol of waters, more specifically of the principle of life, and is the well-known vāhana of Varuṇa. In the Mbh. Kāmadeva, who is identified with Kṛṣhṇa's son Pradyumna, is Makaradhvaja and Mīnaketana. Kāmadeva is also a form of Agni, and Agni is born of the water. The ninth Jaina Tīrthankara is also associated with makara. Makara has also been shown as the vāhana of the river goddess Gaṅgā, of the various Yakshas³ and sometimes of Umā as well. On some coins of Samudragupta, a goddess is shown standing on a makara. Allan identified her with Gaṅgā.

In addition to makara the water-horse, water-elephant, water-bull and winged water-lion are found in association with Yakshas, etc.

The connection between water and snakes seems to have been a vital factor in the Nāga-worship. According to Vogel, "it would be difficult to quote another instance in which it takes such a prominent place, in literature, folk-lore and art, as it does in India. Nor would it be possible to name another country where the

¹Banerjea, J.N., DHI, Ch. IX.

²Hopkins, E.W., Origin and Evolution of Religion, p. 36.

³In Buddhism Māra (= Kāmadeva) is a Yaksha.

development of this cult can be studied during a period which may be estimated at no less than three millennia". According to him the regular appearance of the snakes at the commencement of the rainy season may be considered as the reason for regarding the reptile as the symbol of the fertility. It is also generally assumed that the symbol of the entwined serpent-pair represents both male and female fertility principles.²

Vishņu or Nārāyaṇa is associated with Śesha or Anantanāga, but occasionally he is found as hostile to the Nāgas who were probably originally a non-Aryan snake-worshipping tribe.³ The hostility of Vishṇu against the Nāgas is indicated by the conquest of Kālīya by Kṛshṇa, an incarnation of Vishṇu. Śiva-Paśupati represented on a seal at Mohenjodaro is shown as worshipped by the hooded cobras. That proves the antiquity of the concept of the Paurāṇika Śiva as Nāgeśa.

The association of the Nāgas with Jainism is reflected in the recognition given to the serpent-king as the protector of Pārśvanātha.

Among birds, Garuda is identified with the sun traversing the space and is held to be the arch enemy of the serpants. According to Jarl Charpentier the story of Kadru and Vinītā as given in the Suparṇāḍhyāya must have originally been an ancient animal saga in which the chief actors were the serpent and the eagle. In Vaishṇavism Garuḍa is the vehicle of Vishṇu, and is very frequently shown as carrying the deity with or without Lakshmī. He is often depicted as half-bird and half-man. In the words of V.S. Agrawala, "Suparṇa, the Eagle which is the same as Garuḍa being the symbol of Sūrya, Time, Samvatsara, Agni and for the matter of that of each god associated with movement..... The Garuḍa-Nāga motif of art is an extension of the Suparṇa myth." In the Sātvata list of the 39 incarnations of Vishṇu, Garuḍa appears as Vihangama and Amṛtaharaṇa, the God's 9th and 18th avatāras, though the name Amṛtaharaṇa may also stand for Indra, for he stole the nectar from

¹Vogel, Quoted in *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, by B.C. Sinha, Delhi, 1983, p. 56.

²Chattopadhyay, B., Coins and Icons, p. 49.

³Chattopadhyay, B., The Evolution of Theistic Sects in Ancient India, p. 39.

⁴Charpentier, J., Quoted in Hinduism and Symbol Worship, p. 179.

⁵Agrawala, V.S., Indian Art, p. 51.

the Nāgas.¹ In the earliest period Garuda is represented as a huge parrot-like bird, or as bird-man. In the latter form he is usually found as the capital of a column or is placed in front of a Vaishnava shrine.

The peacock is also considered as the sun-bird in Indian mythology and is described in the Mbh. as the eater of snakes. It came to be associated with Skanda-Kārttikeya. The symbol of swan or the goose is found to be associated with Brahmā, Varuṇa, Vishṇu Kubera and goddess Sarasvatī. The parrot is held to be sacred to Kāmadeva. It is also a pet bird of Yakshiṇīs. The owl which was supposed to be the messenger of death in the Rgveda came to be recognised at a late period as the symbol of the goddess Lakshmī. The crow is also associated with one of the terrible forms of the Mother Goddess.²

Tree Symbols

Tree worship is one of the oldest and most widely spread forms of worship. According to Hopkins probably the tree-world as a whole was an earlier object of worship than any individual tree.³ In the symbolism of ancient nations the sacred tree sometimes figures as a type of the universe, and represents the whole system of created things, but more frequently as a tree of life.⁴

In India, definite evidence of tree worship is as old as the Indus Civilization. Belief in the sacredness of some trees is also evidenced in the Vedic literature. The plant of soma occupied an important place among the Vedic deities. In the RV (X.135.1) it is under a tree that Yama drinks soma with the gods and ancestors. In the AV (V.4.3) we find reference to the fig tree under which the gods sit in the third heaven. In the Chhāndogya (VIII.5.3) and the Kaushītaki (1.3) Upanishads reference is made to the fig tree as well as the Tree of Life. In the Purāṇas we often find reference to Pārijāta, Kalpadruma and other celestial trees. In the Epics Chaityavṛkshas are mentioned as the resorts of the Devas,

¹Banerjea, DHI, p. 529.

²Chattopadhyay, B., Coins and Icons, p. 46.

⁸Hopkins, Origin and Evolution of Religion, p. 22.

Sinha, B.C., Hinduism and Symbol Worship, p. 35.

Goyal, S.R., RHAI, I. p. 29.

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Yakshas, Nāgas, Apsarās, Bhūtas, etc. Even today each village in India has some sacred tree. In Paurāṇika Hinduism pīpal is regarded as specially sacred. Its sanctity was recognised in Buddhism also. The vata or nyagrodha, that is banyan, is the basis of much Paurāṇika symbolism. The tulasī plant is associated with Vishņu and is usually tended with great care even now in the courtyards of the Hindus.

The concept of Kalpavrksha is also found in various sects. In the Purāṇas trees have often been identified with gods. In the Padma Purāṇa, pīpal is an incarnation of Vishṇu, baḍa tree of Rudra and palāśa of Brahmā. Numismatic data illustrates and proves the literary tradition.

Solar Symbols

Sun is regarded as a symbol of life. One great fountain of all idolatory in the world has been the veneration paid by men to the sun. In India it is honoured from ancient times. Chakra is the symbol of the Sun and also of time. It is identified with the supreme moral order in the form of Dharma-Chakra or Sudarsana Chakra. In the words of V.S. Agrawala, "The Cosmos is known as Brahmāṇḍa-Chakra; the World order as Samsāra-Chakra; Human Life as Bhava-Chakra; the flux of men's action as Karma-Chakra; the Revolving Wheel of Time as Kāla-Chakra; the Moral order which governs the universal and the individual ordinances as Dharma-Chakra. The Chakra stands for the perfect cycle of life which is at once beautiful and accessible to all, and therefore called Sudarsana-Chakra, the wheel of the Divine Preserver of world and life, Bhagavān Vishņu. The Divine is Transcendent creator but His immanent presence becomes manifest as the dynamic Chakra or Revolving Wheel".3

The commonest of the symbols found on the Punch-marked coins is chakra or sun which occurs generally on the obverse with very few exceptions. Foucher finds in them so many forms of the

¹Cf. Banerjea, DHI, p. 84.

²Chattopadhyay, op. cit., p. 34 f. Tree-in-railing is one of the important numismatic devices. It is identified with bodhi tree by Spooner and with Chaityavrkshas by Banerjea.

³Agrawala, V.S., Chakra-dhvaja, Preface.

Dharmachakra symbol. But according to Banerjea the suggestion that most of them stand for the sun is more acceptable.1 Similarly the spoked wheel and its variants on some coins may stand for the Sudarsana of Vishņu, and Vedic Vishņu was an aspect of the Sun god with whom Vasudeva was identified.2 The worship of the Chakra was a well-established cult known as Chakra-Maha. The Chakra is frequently repeated motif in the early Indian art at Bharhut, Sanchi, Bodhgaya, Amaravati and Mathura. At some places, it occurs as triśūla-chakra (wheel, topped by trident). In Jaina art, the motif of the Chakra-stambha framing a Tīrthankara image together with an ashṭamangalaka mālā is represented on the Avagapattas. The Buddhist worship it as the Dharmachakra of the Buddha. In the sphere of polity the chakra personified the rule of a Chakravartī king. It is graphically represented on the Chakra-Vikrama coin of Chandragupta II showing the Gupta emperor as worshipping the Lord Chakrapurusha. The worship of potter's wheel during the marriage ceremony is a relic of Chakra worship. V.S. Agrawala rightly observes, "there is hardly any other cult of such universal hold as Chakraworship".

Svastika is a solar symbol which indicates the four-armed pattern of the cosmos. Each chakra or solar symbol carries within its womb a svastika formed by combining four right angles of 90° each. It it one of the ashtamangala marks recognised in all Indian religious sects. It is found even on some Mohenjodaro seals. Cross may be regarded as its simplified version. Later on svastika occurs on the Punch-marked coins and in the Maurya. Sunga, Kushāṇa and Gupta art.

Lunar Symbol

Moon is also worshipped as a god since the Vedic age. Soma as moon was one of the popular deities in the early Vedic age. In Northern India Karavā-Chautha and Saṅkaṭa-Chaturthī are important occasions for the worship of the Moon even now. On the Karavā-Chautha day women worship the moon for the long life of their husbands, and on the Saṅkaṭa-Chaturthi day for children.

¹Banerjea, DHI, p. 137.

²Ibid.

Śivalinga, Śrīchakra and Śālagrāma

Siva has been represented in Indian art from the Indus Valley Civilization down to our own times both in linga and human forms. Both are deeply rooted in the religious tradition of India, Similarly the Mother Goddess is represented in human form as well by Śrīchakras (ring-stones) found from Taxila to Pāṭaliputra. They are of hard-stone, with or without a hole in the centre and show the Mother Goddess in various forms and postures. At times there are only plural geometrical patterns. As noted by us elsewhere, the worship of ring-stones was known in the Indus Civilization also. Marshall's interpretation that these are to be regarded as representations of yoni, the female organ of generation, as symbolising motherhood and fertility still appears to be the correct one. We have discussed the significance of linga and śrichakra worship in detail in this work elsewhere.

In Vaishņavism Vishņu is often worshipped aniconically in the form of Šālagrāma. The Pāñcharātrins, however, seldom, if at all, enshrine it in the main sanctum. It is usually given a subsidiary position in temple or woshipped in private chapels of the individual householders. The Bhāradvāja Saṁhitā Pariśishṭa (III. 57-8) states that "Hari is to be always worshipped in images; but when these are wanting then alone other objects are to be used for this purpose. Of these objects again, Śālagrāmas are the best, for a Śālagrāma stone is the celetial form of Hari." The Śālagrāmas are usual]y procured from the bed of the Gaṇḍakī, a tributary of the Gaṇḍa as Bāṇalingas are generally picked up from the bed of the Revā.

Other Symbols

In Paurāņika religion the custom of erecting dhvajas or votive columns in honour of the various sectarian deities like Vāsudeva-Vishņu, Sankarashaņa, Pradyumna, Kubera, Skanda-Mahasena and others, before their temples was very popular. These dhvajas evolved out of the Yūpastambhas which were erected by kings and noble men of the earlier period (and of the later ages also) in

¹Cf. Sinha, Hindulsm and Symbol Worship, p. 104 f.

²Goyal, RHAI, I, p. 18 f.

³Banerjea, DHI, p. 169; cf. Sinha, op. cit., p. 126 f.

Banerjea, op. cit., p. 394.

⁵Ibid., p. 458.

commemoration of the performance of the various Vedic sacrifices. At Besnagar was found the famous Garudadhvaja of Heliodorus and also separate tāla, garuda and makara capitals suggesting the probability that the first three of the four Vyūhas (or three of the Pañchavṛshṇivīras) viz., Vāsudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa and Pradyumna were enshrined in the locality.¹

In Paurānika Hinduism, specially Vaishnavism, attributes or weapons meant to be placed in the hands of the deities were usually personified and represented anthropomorphically. Such representations came to be designated generally as the Āyudhapurushas. Chakra and gadā in human form are found as early as the Gupta period; śankha and rarely padma are also anthropomorphised in the Vishnuite reliefs of the early and late mediaeval periods of Eastern and Northern India. Various other emblems, such as Vajra, Śakti, danḍa, khaḍga, pāśa, ankuśa, triśūla, etc., are also personified in late iconographic texts, but in art they are seldom shown in human form.²

Lotus is one of the most popular religious symbols. It symbolises life floating on the surface of creative waters. Śrī-Lakshmī is associated in every possible way with lotus. She is praised as 'lotus-born', 'standing on a lotus', 'seated on a lotus', 'lotus-coloured', 'lotus-thighed', 'lotus-eyed', 'abounding in lotuses', 'decked with lotus garlands', etc.

The mountain symbol, usually with three, five or six arches, is found variously represented on ancient India coins. According to Spooner the Jainas drew this figure as emblematic of a Tīrthankara and denominative of mount Meru. J.N. Banerjea, however, feels that the symbol of mountain, with a crescent above it, may be the aniconic representation of Śiva.

On ancient Indian silver Punch-marked coins we find an extensive use of the taurine symbol in different combinations. It is also found used in some pieces of early Maurya art. The Nandipāda symbol represents a certain development of the taurine symbol. It closely resembles the three-pointed Triratna symbol representing the Buddha, Dharma (Law) and Sangha (Buddhist order). The Jainas also adopted the symbol to serve their own purpose.

¹Banerjea, DHI, p. 104.

^{*}Ibid., p. 537.

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The symbol of *cross* found on some Indus seals may be traced on the reverse of some uninscribed cast coins. It symbolises the twin principles of male and female fertility. It may also be regarded as a simplified version of *syastika*.

Meaning of Image Worship

The word 'image' is derived from the Latin word imago. It has the basic sense of 'likeness'. Its close parallels in Sanskrit are pratikṛti, pratimā, vimbha, sandṛś, etc. The term 'icon' on the other hands is derived from the Greek word eikon and signifies 'an object of worship' (usually but not necessarily an image).1 A pratimā may or may not be an object of worship. The avasi pratima of Bhīma crushed by Dhṛtarāshṭra and suvarṇa pratimā of Sītā mentioned in the Rāmāyana were not meant for worship. According to J.N. Banerjea the words like pratimā and sandrs were used for symbolic representation of divinities which were not associated with particular cults,2 but in course of time they acquired the significance of archā (object of regular worship). Pāņini in his Ashṭādhyāyī uses the terms pratimā and pratikṛti probably for images of gods. Pratikrti, in the sense of likeness, is noticed in one of his sūtras (V.3.96); another sūtra under it (V.3.99)—jīvikārthe chāpaņye refers to certain pratikṛtis which are jīvikārtha (for livelihood) as well as apanya (not for sale). The rule applies to the images of gods which were made the means of livelihood, not by selling them but by exhibiting them from door to door.3 Patañjali uses the term archā and says that the Mauryas had images of gods (archās) made for obtaining gold (Mauryair hiranyārthibhiḥ archchhā prakalpitā).

Was Image Worship Prevalent in the Vedic Society?

The antiquity of image worship in India is a highly controversial problem. According to some scholars including R.P. Chanda the excavations of the Indus Civilization have proved that worship of images of human and superhuman beings in Yogic postures, both seated and standing, was prevalent in India in the chalcolithic period. He regards stone lingas, the figurines of mother goddess, and the seals of Pasupati and the seven divinities as cult icons. But J.N. Banerjea

¹Cf. Banerjea, DHI, p. 36.

²¹bid., p. 39.

³ Ibid., p. 40.

Chanda, R.P., Medieval Indian Sculpture in the British Museum, p. 9.

is of the opinion that nature of these images cannot be determined till the mystry of the Indus script is solved.¹

As regards the Vedic period, Max Müller, Wilson, Macdonell, Dayanand Sarasvati, R.P. Chanda, etc. believed that the Vedic Aryans knew no image worship or temples. Their religion was the religion of yajñas performed to please abstract gods of nature though they were described as having human forms. Thus the very nature of Vedic religion precludes the worship of images in that period. However Bollensen, S.V. Venkateswara, B. Ch. Bhattacharya and many others hold the opposite view. They have pointed out² that (1) in the RV gods are often described as divo naras or naras and mention is made of their vapuh, tanu, rūpa, etc. (2) Several Rgvedic passages refer to images of gods. For example: 'men decorate Indra and Agni' (Indrāgni śumbhatā naraḥ), 'who will buy this my Indra for ten cows' (Ka imam daśabhirmamendram krīņāti dhenubhih). The RV IV. 17.4 refers to Indrasya kartā. (3) Sometimes Vrtra, the foe of Indra is mentioned in plural (Vṛtrāṇi). It may only mean that here mention is made of his various images. (4) The Vedic gods were supposed to have two types of bodies, abstract and finite. Image was evidently regarded as the temporary finite resting place of the abstract body. The AV (VII. 31), for example, askes the deity, "with your real body enter this concrete body" (svayā tanvā tanumairayata). (5) Venkteswara even finds reference to temples in RV VII. 59.10, etc. where Maruts are described as Grhamedhāsa(=in the house or temple).3

J.N. Benerjea, however, makes a distinction between the religion of the Vedic priests (which is described in detail in the Vedic texts) and the religious practices of the pre-Aryan settlers of India. The Vedic Aryans, according to Banerjea, did not practice image worship. He points out that: (1) The anthropomorphic nature of the Vedic gods mentioned by Bollensen etc. is no proof of their worship in the form of image for they are always remembered as forces of nature. (2) While discussing the form of gods (ākāra chintanam devatānām) even Yāska clearly states that the view that gods are apurushavidhāh (those who do not resemble

¹Op. cit., p. 42.

² Ibid., p. 43 ff.

^{*}DHI, p. 47.

human form) is more correct. (3) Banerjea does not accept the interpretation of Venkateswara etc. of the Vedic passages quoted above. (4) The Brāhmaṇa and Sūtra works, which describe yajñas in detail, do not mention the use of archās. There is no record at all of the Vedic temples or images. (5) The references to the purchase of Indra probably indicate not to his actual images but to his symbols. In this connection Coomaraswamy also quotes the analogy of the Bodhi tree and the pādukās of the Buddha worshipped as Buddha himself. Banerjea even doubts whether the Indra symbols mentioned in the RV were worshipped at all. The reference to the images of Vṛtra in plural shows that these were made only for abhichāra (magic) purposes.¹

However Banerjea is ready to accept the prevalence of image worship in the Vedic age among the non-Aryans. (1) The Śiśnadevāļi mentioned in the RV were probaly those who had phallus for their deity (Śiśnadevāh yeshām te). As we have already seen, the numerous phalli discovered from the Indus Valley sites were probably the cult objects of these people. They were looked upon with contempt by the Vedic people. Even when phallus became the emblem of Rudra, orthodox Aryans were hesitant to accept it.2 The Mūradevāh were also a non-Aryan people. In one verse Indra is requested to kill them. Sayana explains the term muradeva as Rākshasa but A.C. Das observes that the term may mean 'senseless - like stones'. The word may therefore mean 'those who worship stone images which are senseless objects'.3 A.P. Banerjee-Shastri suggests that the term Maurya (in the passage of the Mahābhāshya quoted above) does not refer to the royal Mauryas but to the Mūradevas and that the term mūrti is derived from their tribal name.4

Gradual Recognition of Image Worship in the Aryan Society

The partial recognition of the image worship among the Aryans occurs in the latest sections of the Vedic literature—the khilas to the earlier Brāhmaṇas and Aranyakas and the Gṛhyasūtras, etc. According to Gopinath Rao image worship originated

¹For references see DHI, p. 47 ff.

²Cf. Goyal, RHAI, I, p. 21 ff.

³Das, Rigvedic Culture, p. 145.

Banerjee-Shastri, A.P., 'Iconism in India', IHQ, XII, pp. 335-41.

among the mentally poor people who could not conceive the figure of god in their mind. Among the factors which increased the popularity of image worship the most important was the doctrine of bhakti, the loving adoration to some personal god (supra). The gods round whom the new sects and cults developed were not the prominent Vedic gods but were mostly human heroes like Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa, Arjuna, etc. or mythical beings like Siva, Yaksha Maṇibhadra, Pūrṇabhadra, etc. (supra). In their cults rendering of one's homage was done by various acts of pūjā in which images were necessary (supra). In this connection the follo-

wing facts may be taken into special consideration:1

(1) Pāṇini's sūtra—jīvikārthe chāpaņye (indicating that some people sold images for livelihood)—as explained by later commentators gives us positive evidence about the concrete representations of deities. Here Panini does not mention the deities themselves but elsewhere he does mention the bhaktas of Vasudeva, Arjuna and Mahārājas (Lokapālas) (supra). (2) Patañjali in his Mahābhāshya mentions a few gods—Viśākha, Skanda and Šiva—whose images were made in his age for worship (sampratipujārthā). He also asserts that Mauryas filled their treasury by selling images. (3) In the Durganiveśa section of the Arthaśāstra, Kautilya refers to the temples of Aparājita, Apratihata, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Šiva, Vaiśravaņa, Aśvin and the goddess Madirā. He also refers to images of gods and goddesses carved on wooden door frames of royal underground chambers and to devadhvajas, pratimās and to procession of gods. (4) The Apastamba Gṛhyaśūtra mentions the images of Isana (5) The Manusmṛti refers to image worship at several places. It lays down that the images are to be circumbulated, that one should not step over the shadow of gods, that on the parvas one should go to the images of gods for protection, etc. However, it deprecates the temple priests, probably because they took money for their bhakti. (6) The Mahābhārata often mentions images of gods especially in connection with the various tirthas. (7) Curtius records that the image of Heracles was carried in front of the army of Porus. (8) In his IVth Rock Edict Aśoka claims that among other things he showed divyāni rūpāni (images of gods) to the people (though this reference does not prove the 'worship' of these images). (9) The Ghosūndī inscription of Sarvatāta

¹Banerjea, J.N., op. cit., p. 85 ff.

(1st century B.C.) refers to the pūjāśilā of Sankarshana and Vāsudeva and the prākāra of Nārāyaṇāvāṭakā.1 According to Banerjea in the Nārāyaṇavaṭaka images of Sankarshaṇa and Vāsudeva were installed. (10) The Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus of about 100 B.C. was engraved on a pillar which was most likely erected before a shrine of Vāsudeva.2 (11) A prāsādottama (=temple) of Bhagavata (=Kṛshṇa) was built at the same place by Gautamīputra Bhagavata at about the same time.3 It must have contained images. (12) The Mora well inscription of the time of Mahakshatrapa Rājuvula's son Sodāsa mentions the stone images of Vṛshṇi Pañchavīras enshrined in a stone temple (śaila devagṛha). Here the words used for images are archā and pratimā.4 (13) It is true that actual images of gods appear somewhat late in Indian archaeology but this paucity may be easily explained. Firstly, one should remember that the iconoclastic zeal of the Muslims has been the cause of destruction of a large number of images. Secondly, the ancient practice of making images of wood and clay has been responsible for this paucity. The Brhatsamhita lays down that images of gods and goddesses should be made of wood. Thirdly, we should not forget that the icons make their appearance on Indian coins at least a few centuries before the Christ.

From the above discussion it is obvious that (1) the Vedic Aryans did not practice image worship, but (2) some non-Aryan people of the Vedic age probably worshipped cult images. (3) In the post-Vedic period, however, specially after the advent of bhakti, image worship gradually became a part of Brāhmaṇical religion.

¹Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, Jaipur, 1982, p. 173 ff.

^{*}Ibid., p. 156 ff.

^{*}Ibid., p. 158.

^{&#}x27;Ibid., p. 204 ff.

Chapter 5

Social Philosophy of epic-Pauranika Religion and Rituals

Main features of the Hindu Social Life

The basic outline of the Hindu Society had emerged long before the transformation of the Vedic religion into Pauranika dharma. The Hindu society, as is well-known, was based on Varņāśramadharma. The four-fold varna system which later on degenerated into caste or jāti system prevailed almost throughout the country. In this system the Brahmanas enjoyed the most honoured position. Together with the Kshatriyas and Vaisyas, the next two varnas, they were known as dvijas or twice-born. The Śūdras were the lowest of the four varnas. Their position had considerably declined. They could not study the Veda and perform the Vedic sacrifices. They received heavier punishment for committing certain offences for which the Brāhmaṇas escaped with lighter punishment.1 The antyajas were 'born of the lowest castes'. Whether all the Sudras were antyajas or not is a controversial question.2 There was no untouchability in the Vedic age but it had become an important feature of the Hindu society of the Pauranika period.

Theoretically a Hindu was expected to pass through the four stages or āśramas of life—brahmacharya, gṛhastha, vānaprastha and sannyāsa. Whether or not a person could adopt sannyāsa immediately after brahmacharya is a point on which the Dharma-śāstras differ. However, generally Manu's view was popular according to which one must pass through the gṛhasthāśrama because it is

¹We have discussed the emergence of the caste system in Brāhmanical society and the attitude of the Buddhists towards it in RHAI, I, p. 103 ff.; 272 ff.

²Majumdar, A.K., Concise History of India, III, New Delhi, 1983, p. 16.

³For our views on the origin of the asrama organisation, vide RHAI, I, p. 129ff.

only as a grhastha that one can pay his debt to the devas, pitrs and rshis (rnatraya). A grahstha was expected to perform a number of samskoras which alone entitled him to become a dvija. The upanayana and marriage were most important of them, and samskaras from garbhadhana to upanayana were obligatory for all male dvijas. The rules of marriages (which were theoretically of eight types) were quite strict. The Dharmasastras permit anuloma marriages, that is marriages of a male with a female of the same or lower caste. Pratiloma marriages, that is marriage of a girl with a lower caste male, were prohibited. On the detailed rules about them our authorities differ.

An important feature of the Hindu society of the Paurāṇika age was the decline in the position of women. Now gradually widow remarriages and niyoga were prohibited, the institution of sati was popularised and female education considerably declined. In many passages of the Dharmaśāstrika texts women and Śūdras are lumped together in the same category and are relegated to a low status. The institution of slavery not only existed and was recognised, but flourished everywhere. It is against this general background that the role of the epic-Paurāṇika religion as an instrument of social change may be studied. But first let us discuss of the attitude of the people of the Paurāṇika age towards their Vedic heritage because it had much to do with their outlook towards social problems.

Vedism and epic-Paurāņika Religion

Though the epic-Paurāṇika religion emphasized bhakti and pūjā of the new sectarian deities, stressed the importance of the Purāṇas as religious texts and tended to underplay the significance of Vedic ritualism, yet it did not altogether give up faith in the authority of the Vedas and Vedic mode of worship. It may appear somewhat contrary to much what has been said in the preceding pages, but it is a fact that the Purāṇas are full of passages which seemingly advocate the importance of the Vedas and the religion of

¹For a study of such references see Sharma, R.S., 'Co-references to Woman and Sūdra in Early Literature', Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India, New Delhi, 1983, Ch. V, p. 45 ff.

sacrifice. The authors of the Puranas realized that unless the authority of the Vedas is established, Vedic ritualism is given at least theoretical recognition and the Varņāśramadharma is strengthened, the Hindu society cannot be re-vitalized. Hence without giving up the new emphasis on bhakti and pūjā they accept Vedic rituals also and adopt various means for this purpose. In the Vishnu P. the Vedas are said to constitute the body of Vishnu. In the Vavu P. Siva is identified with the Vedas and sacrifice. In the Varāha P. Sāvitrī is said to be the mother of the Vedas. identified with Nārāyana, Brahmā and Rudra. In the Bhāgavata P. also Vishnu, in his Boar incarnation, is identified with sacrifice. Regarding the mission of the incarnation of Siva, the Kūrma P. declares that the blue-red Sankara incarnates himself for establishing the Śrauta and Smārta dharma and for doing good to the devotees. In the Devibhagavata P. at one place Suka argues that the Vedic religion which encourages the slaughter of animals cannot confer final release. To this Janaka replies that the killing of animals in sacrifices is equivalent to no killing because there is no special intention of killing on the part of the sacrificer.1

In the Kūrma P. Durgā declares: "Practise the Varņāśramadharma with self-knowledge as directed by the Vedas and lawbooks for final beatitude.... Dharma, according to the Vedas and the lawbooks, is sacrifice etc. Dharma originated from the Vedas and from nothing else. So, one who is desirous of knowing Dharma or attaining moksha should take recourse to the Vedas which are identical with myself.... There is no Sastra except the Vedas which can claim to be the source of Dharma. There are of course, the literatures of the Vāmas, Ārhatas, Kāpilas, Pāncharātras and many other sects, but these were declared by Devi herself with a view to deluding those people who mislead others on the strength of bad scriptures." The various other Puranas point out that the avataras of Vishnu and Siva were intended for the revival of Dharma and the performances of sacrifices. According to the Vāyu P. 'When sacrifices grew rare, lord Vishnu was born again and again for establishing Dharma and destroying Adharma'. The Vishnu P. declares that when the practices taught by the Vedas and the institutes of law shall nearly have ceased, and the close of the Kali age

¹Hazra, Purāņic Records, p. 230. 2 Ibid., p. 233.

shall be near a portion of that divine being shall be born as Kalkin to destroy all the Mlechehhas and thieves and re-establish righteousness upon earth.¹

The external proof of this tendency is the fact that kings of the Paurāṇika age on the one hand claim that they were great devotees of Siva (Paramamāheśvaras) or Vishṇu (Paramabhāgavatas) or Sūrya (Paramādityabhaktas) etc. and, on the other, preclaim the performence by them of great Vedic sacrifices like aśvamedha. A large number of kings of the pre-Gupta age, the rulers of the Gupta and Vākāṭaka royal houses and their contemporaries and also the kings of the post-Gupta age prove the point conclusively. The Purāṇas also contain stories of the various kings of different ages who performed numerous sacrifices, gave heavy priestly fees to Brāhmaṇas and repaired to heaven to enjoy their fruit.

However, it does not mean that the Paurānika accepted the Vedic ritualism in toto. Actually for the common man they re-interpreted the meaning of sacrifice itself. The concept of the Panchayajna of the Pauranika age clearly shows the trend of the age: now study is brahmayajña (Vedic recitation), tarpana (offering libation to the ancestors) is pitryajña (elaborate rituals for ancestors in Vedic times), homa (offering clarified butter into the fire) is devayajña (sacrifice to the gods), bali (or gifts to living beings) is bhūtayajña (sacrifice to creatures) and hospitality is nṛyajña (sacrifice to men). Thus a householder becomes the performer of the panchamahayajnas without much trouble for none of these is a sacrifice in the Vedic sense.3 "The trouble, expense and complexity are eliminated and yet the sense of having performed the necessary rituals is created. . . . although man still seems to believe in the efficacy of scrifices. . . . the sacrifices themselves are entirely different. Hence the sacriptures are full of formulas of substitution."4 If one visits a pilgrimage and performs the necessary penances for two or three days, one collects the merit of this or that sacrifice. If one takes and fulfils a vow one also gains the merit of this or that sacrifice. If one gives proper dakshina to

¹ Ibid.

^{*}HIG, p. 63.

Bhattacharji, Sukumari, The Indian Theogony, p. 353.

⁴Ibid.

the worthy Brahmanas one acquires the merit of so many sacrifices. Thus the merit of sacrifices are obtained through easier religious practices.1

Hindu Attitude towards Social Change; Doctrine of Ekavākyatā vs. Moral Relativism

As in other periods of Indian history, in the epic-Paurānika age also great and constant changes took place in social organisation (e.g. caste system became more rigid in matters of food, marriage, social behaviour etc. and position of women and Śūdras deteriorated) and in religious rites and customs. Animal sacrifices, though occasionally performed even now, ceased to be popular and cult of non-violence gained the upper hand leading to a new interpretation of the concept of sacrifice itself (supra). The Smrtis written from time to time naturally reflect these changes giving rise to great conflict in socioreligious norms among themselves. But it was no problem for their authors because they believed that the Smrtis have Veda as their source. Manu says that for those who desire to know Dharma, Śruti or Veda is the highest authority (XII.96). While discussing the sources of Dharma (Śruti, Smrti, sadāchāra and two more) the Mitāksharā on Yājňavalkya I.7 states the general rule that in case of conflict each preceding one is more powerful than the each succeeding one.2 But for the commentators and authors of digests on smrti law all the Dharmasastras that they consider are equally authoritative, none having precedence over the other. For them the Dharmaśāstras themselves are the expression of eternal law though their ultimate source is the Veda, that is the Truth. The date at which this Truth was revealed in human language is of little importance. Therefore according to the traditional view despite the apparent contradictions and discrepancies that seemingly exist between them, complete consensus of opinion among the successive Smṛtis has to be assumed. This is the famous doctrine of ekavākyatva which the medieval commentators inherited from Mīmāmsā.3 They did not accept that the Smrtis were written to cater the changing needs of different times and different regions. They vigorously

¹ Ibid.

^a Kane, HD, V, ii, p. 1264 f.

³Lingat, Robert, 'Time and Dharma', Contributions to Indian Sociology, VI, ed. by Louis Dumont and D. Pocock, The Hague, 1962, p. 7 ff.

struggle with ingenious devices to create uniformity in conflict.¹ This attitude created the myth of the extremely conservative and unchanging nature of Indian society which the writings of Thoreau, Poussin, Garbe, Sorokin and others popularized.² But as pointed out by Robert Lingat the differences noticed between the various Dharmaśāstras are undeniably the traces of the changes that were taking place in the ideas and mores during the long period over which this literature developed. Hence the rise and growth of the modern historical school of Dharmaśāstra studies which seeks to establish chronological evolution of the Smṛṭi laws.³

Here it may be noted that the authors of the Smrtis did not themselves believe in the doctrine of ekavākvatā. They do not try to reconcile their own views with the views of earlier Smrti authors. They expressly favour moral relativism in more than one ways. Firstly, they frankly admit that some people practise customs contrary to their teachings. Baudhāyana had already enumerated aberrant observances practised by the Brahmanas of both North and South and conceded that no blame should be laid upon the Brahmanas who observe practices of a particular region for, according to him, local usages must prevail. Secondly, Smrti writers including Manu and Yājñavalkya (I.156) prescribe that one should give up what was once deemed to be dharma if it has become hateful to the people. It is significant that here the word used is lokavikrushta or lokavidvishta (hated or reviled by the people) and not śishtavidvishta (hated by the śishtas),4 though elsewhere Yājñavalkya (II. 21) proposes that when two Smrtis are in conflict, reasoning based on the practices of the sishtas should prevail. On the other hand, Brhaspati concedes the superiority of the Manusmrti as representing the real view of the Vedas (which led to the practice of interpolating new passages in this work opposing what it had already declared). Gautama (I.5) opines that there should be option and Gobhila pleads for the acceptance of the majority view. Thus it is clear that the Smṛti authors did not try to

¹Singh, S., Evolution of the Smrti Law, Varanasi, 1972, p. 5.

²Pathak, V.S., Foreword to *The Rural-Urban Economy and Social Changes in Ancient India*, by J.M. Rai, Varanasi, 1974.

³For a detailed study of the various approaches to the study of Smrti law, vide, S. Singh, op. cit., Ch. I.

⁴Kane, op. cit., p. 1270.

establish the theory that all texts bearing this name teach the same thing. Thirdly, as early as Manu the theory of the decadence of humanity and the withering of virtue in the course of the four yugas was propounded. Manu (I. 85) compared dharma to a bull who is deprived of one foot in each successive yuga and concluded that "Otherwise are the dharmas in the kṛta age (Anyekṛtayuge dharmah), otherwise in the Treta age and the Dvapara age (Tretāyām-Dvāparepare), otherwise in the Kali age (anye Kaliyuge) because of the debasement of these ages (yuga hrāsānurūpataḥ)". In the Parāśarasmṛti it is opined that the rules revealed by Manu are valid for the Krta age, those by Gautama for the Treta age, those by Sankhalikhita for the Dvapara age and those by Parasara himself for the Kali Age.1

Theories of Kalivarjya and Apaddharma

The Bṛhaspatismṛti also contains a passage where it is maintained that certain customs such as niyoga or the recognition of secondary sons other than the adoptive son are no longer possible in the Kali age owing to the spiritual decline of mankind. On the basis of such ideas was later on evolved the theory of Kalivarjyas according to which certain practices, even though admitted or prescribed by the Smrtis, are forbidden in the Kali age. authors even imagined that great sages came together at the beginning of the Kali age and declared such rites as prohibited for that age. These rites and practices, about 55 in number, are These include prohibition of nivoga, of called Kalivariyas. offering of the anubandhyā cow after avabhṛta in the Jyotishtoma, of allotment of the largest share of the ancestral wealth to the eldest son, of widow-remarriage, of marriage with a sagotra or matr sapinda girl, of having relation with a Brāhmana who had undertaken ocean voyage even if he had performed expiation for it, of sattradīkshā, of killing of a cow or a bull, of the enjoyment of a cup of wine in the Sautrāmaņī sacrifice, etc.2 Alberuni, who visited India in the early decades of the 11th century, heard the Hindus say that in the age before the Bharata war men were allowed to eat meat of cows, and sacrifices involving the slaughter

¹*Ibid.*, p. 1266.

²For details vide, HD, III, pp. 926-6.

of cows took place. But all this was forbidden subsequently because men had become too weak to perform their duties.¹

Another device by which the social thinkers recognise social change without deviating from the past was the doctrine of Apaddharmas—the duties permissible in the times of The doctrine recognises that in the times of distress social and ethical rules become loose and dharma may assume the form of adharma and adharma may become dharma. In such emergencies the higher varnas may adopt the duties of the lower varnas though they should revert to their svadharma when the condition of distress is over. The Brahmanas and the Vaisyas, for example, may take to arms in order to protect Brahmanas. cows and Vedas and in acute distress a Brāhmaṇa may eat even dog's flesh begged from a Chāṇḍāla.2 The members of the lower varnas however are not permitted to adopt the duties of the higher varnas, though Śūdras could adopt the dharma of a Vaiśya. Thus, in the words of S.K. Belvalkar the Hindu social theorists "developed to their utmost possibilities the convenient notions concerning the "Apad-dharmas" or duties regarded as permissible under stress of circumstances and "Kali-vrajyas" or actions (e.g. the animal sacrifices) which, although once permissible and even obligatory, have to be abjured under present fallen times of Kaliyuga. These two doctrines, worked out with profusion of hair-splitting details, served to ensure a nominal allegiance to the old-world Vedism, while actually affording ample scope to the inevitable modifications in belief and practice that were bound to come in with the progress of times. The art of deviating from the past while yet honestly professing to serve it was thus cultivated well nigh to perfection."3

According to P.V. Kane it would have been more honest if the Dharmaśāstra writers had said that the changed circumstances required that the words of the Veda and rules of the Smṛtis should not be followed.⁴ But in our opinion perhaps it was better what they did in the Indian circumstances. Placed as they

¹Al-Biruni's India, trans. by Sachau, II, p. 152.

²See the Apaddharma Section of the Santiparvan of the Mbh.

³Belvalkar, S.K., Shree Gopal Basu Mallik Lectures on Vedanta Philosophy, Poona, 1929, p. 179 f.

⁴Kane, op. cit., p. 1269 f.

were between the eternal law as represented by the rules of Dharma and the innumerable customs and usages of this vast sub-continent that constitute the living positive law, the commentators were able to suggest a number of different, sometimes contradictory interpretations all based upon the same authority of the Dharmaśāstras. Thus certain practices, often different from each other, could be recognised and legitemized. Their method had the advantage of conferring to the interpretation a pliancy which could never have been obtained had the Dharmasastra been dealt with as temporal legislation. The complexity of the Indian world could hardly accomodate a more uniform type of law.1

Doctrine of Karman

The social outlook of the epic-Pauranika religion was based upon the theory of Karman which came into vogue in the Upanishadic age. It was anticipated in the RV in the form of the concept of rta.2 As we have shown in the first volume of this work,3 in the age of the Brāhmanas the word Karman meant meritorious sacrificial acts (yajña karman), that is the performance of Vedic rituals for obtaining material benefits and obviating evil. It connoted ishtāpūrta or sacrificial acts the results of which are stored in heaven. In the Upanishadic age and in heterodox religions it came to acquire a moral significance: that is good deeds produce good results and bad deeds produce bad results, and nobody can escape from their consequences. Hence karmans determine not only the character but also the future life of the doer. As put by the Brhadāranyaka Upa. (IV. 4.5) "According as one acts, according as one behaves so does he become (yathākārī yathāchārītathā bhavati)". The concept of rebirth in accordance with previous karmans is clearly formulated in the Prasna (III. 7). Svetāsvatara (V.7) and Maitri (III. 1) Upanishads. Prof. G.C. Pande⁴ rightly describes it as a great moral revolution. It tended to render obsolete the performance of vajñas and popularized the notion that happiness and release from suffering may be obtained only through good conduct.

¹Cf. Maine, Henry Sumner, Village Communities in the East and West, 1890, quoted by Robert Lingat, op. cit., p. 16.

²RHAI, I, p. 69.

^{*}Ibid., p. 244 ff.

Pande, G.C., Studies in the Origins of Buddhism, p. 284 ff.

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This moral revolution, which gave a new meaning to the terms pāpa and puņya, dushkrta and sukrta etc., is vividly portrayed in the Smṛtis, the Epics, the Gitā, the Purānas, etc. Some Western thinkers such as A.B. Keith have opined that "the conception of karma. . . . is essentially fatalistic and fatalism is not for a normal mind a good incentive to moral progress" But as argued by S. Gopalan the "equation of karman with fatalism is symptomatic of a misunderstanding of the tone and tenor of Hindu social philosophy inasmuch as the activistic element in it are overlooked completely"2. The term fate signifies the individual's utter helplessness, for it is considered to be a force completely external to the individual. On the other hand, the law of karman rests on the assumptions that social life can be meaningful only if there is freedom of will which enables man to choose the good and eschew the evil, and there is principle of regularity governing human life3. As put in the Yājñavalkya Smrti, just as a chariot cannot move on a single wheel, so destiny (in the sense of past karmans) cannot accomplish its end until it is aided by human endeavour.4 "The essence of the doctrine of karma," Nagaraja Rao observes, "is that it brings home to us the view that the world is not a waste land and that human life is not an accident in a blind interpersonal process".5 Emphasizing the responsibility aspect of the doctrine of karman Prof. Daya Krishna writes, "The idea that one can be responsible for actions which have not been done by one's own self and that one can be redeemed by an action done by somebody else may seem positively outrageous to a sensibility which feels the individual as essentially apart from the relationship with others in which he may happen to be accidentally involved. The doctrine of karma in traditional Hindu thought primarily reflects this basic presupposition that it would be an immoral world indeed if one were to reap the fruits of someone else's actions".6

¹Keith, A.B., The Religion and Philosophy of the Vedas and the Upanishads, II, p. 596.

²Gopalan, S., Hindu Social Philosophy, New Delhi, 1979, p. 26.

^a*Ibid.*, p. 26.

⁴I. 349-51.

Nagaraja Rao, P., 'Some Reflections and Remarks on Karman and Rebirth', Indian Philosophical Annual, I, p. 140 (quoted by S. Gopalan, op. cit., p. 27).

Daya Krishna in Social Philosophy: Past and Future, p. 14.

Karman in Relation to the Doctrine of Rebirth

The doctrine of karman was inter-related with the doctrine of rebirth. In the words of S.N. Dasgupta "One of the presuppositions of the karma theory was that the unseen potency (adṛṣṭa) of the action generally required sometime before it could bring in the appropriate type of fruit (good or bad) to the 'doer'. The fruits so accumulated prepare the 'items of experience' for the next life. Only the fruits of those actions which are extremely wicked or particularly good could be reaped in this life. The nature of the next birth of a man is determined by the nature of pleasurable or painful actions of this life.... As there is no beginning in time of this world-process, so there is no time at which any person first began his actions or experiences. Man has had infinite number of past lives of the most varied nature and instincts of each kind of life exist dormant in the life of individual and thus whenever he has any particular birth as this or that animal or man, the special instincts of that life (technically called vāsanās) come forth. . . . When once certain actions become fit for giving certain experiences, these cannot be avoided, but those actions which have not matured are uprooted once for all if the person attains true knowledge".1

Thus the twin theories of karman and rebirth provided an apparent basis for the varnāśramadharma by proclaiming that one's social status is determined by his or her previous karmans. According to the Chhandogya Upa. (V. 10.7) a person of ramaṇīyācharaṇa (good conduct) obtains ramaṇīya yoni. Gautama (XI. 29) avers that one's varna and āsrama depend on one's own karmans. Actually the whole epic-Paurāņika social outlook is based on this bacic assumption.

Prāyaśchitta, Karmavipāka and Śrāddha

On the doctrine of karman depended the attitude regarding the expiation of sin (prāyaśchitta). In the orthodox Vedic tradition the term prāyaschitta meant rectification of error in the performance of the Vedic ritual (expiation of vidhi aparādha) though in some passages the word has nothing to do with sin and merely means

¹Dasgupta, S.N., A History of Indian Philosophy, I, p. 72 f.

'doing something which would get rid of some accidental mishap'1. Now, after the emergence of the doctrine of karman, prayaschitta came to mean atonement for immoral action (pātaka) involving a set of bodily mortificatory practices to neutralize the retributive potential of evil actions.2 Sins are stated by Brhaspati and others as of two kinds viz. committed intentionally and committed unintentionally. Whether prāyaśchitta can destroy intentionally committed sins, is a question on which authorities differ.3 Further, the Smrtis evolved the doctrine that if a sinner did not undergo prāyaschitta for his sins, he has to suffer torment in hell and is thereafter born as some insect or lower animal or tree on account of some remnants of his sins and then is born as a human being afflicted with deseases or defects. The last two consequences are described as karmavipāka (the fruition of evil deeds)4 which implies that the human beings have to experience in Heaven or Hell the consequences of their deeds.5

The doctrines of karman, rebirth and karmavipāka appear to be somewhat irreconciliable with the practice of śrāddha which occupies an important place in the Paurāṇika religion. The word Śrāddha is evidently derived from sraddhā. The Mitāksharā on Yājñavalkya I.217 defines śrāddha as "abondonment with faith of an article of food or some substitute thereof intending it for (the benefit of) the departed". The doctrines of rebirth and karman imply that the soul leaving one body enters into a new one while the doctrine of śrāddha involves the belief that even after a lapse of hundred years the souls of ancestors are capable of enjoying in an ethereal body the essence of food offered to them. The problem posed by this contradiction is found raised in several Sūtra works, Smṛtis, Purāṇas and other texts and various solution of it are given. For example, the Matsya P. opines that if after death one's father

¹*HD*, IV, p. 57.

²Cf. Krishnan, Y., 'The Doctrine of Karma as a Formative and Innovative Factor in Indian Society and Religions', Studies in Religion and Change', ed. by Madhu Sen, p. 15 ff.

⁸Kane, HD, IV, p. 61 ff.

⁴Ibid., p. 172.

⁵Cf. Chatterji, B., 'Some Aspects of Religious Beliefs and Practices in Ancient India', Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 66.

⁶HD, IV, p. 334.

becomes a god the food offered to him in Śrāddha becomes nectar. if he becomes a daitya the food reaches him in the form of various enjoyments, if he becomes a beast it becomes grass for him, and so on. According to Viśvarūpa gods have access everywhere and also have power to gratify Pitrs wherever they may be. Another reply is that it is a question concerned with sastra and what the śāstra says on this point should be accepted.1

Doctrine of Karman and Belief in Astrology

Belief in fate was fostered in ancient India heretical sects such as that of the Ajīvikas. As we have shown in the first volume of this work2 the Ajīvikas believed that the destiny of human beings was fixed and predetermined and that what is ordained could not be changed by the free will Some Grhvasūtras attribute and action of human agents. some omens to a good bride. Later on Greek impact contributed to the belief in the influence of the stars on human life and a system of horoscope developed. It was to some extent against the doctrine of karman though in phalitajyotisha it is maintained that the stars only foretell the consequences of the past deeds. Some persons such as Kautilya questioned the usefulness of consulting stars but from the Gupta age orwards astrology became an important factor in the mental life of the people. Yājñavalkya ascribes even the rise and fall of kings to planets and recommends their worship. The Epics and Purānas popularised astrological ideas. They also deal with sakunas in detail. The Agni P. embodies the largest number of verses on astrology. In the Kṛshi Parāśara charms and spells for agriculture are laid down. Alberuni, who visited India in the eleventh century, noticed the great importance accorded to astrology in this country.3

Synthesis of Pravṛtti and Nivṛtti and the Doctrine of Purushārthas As noted in the first volume of the present work, the synthesis of the Vedic and non-Vedic thought currents gave birth to the

¹Ibid , p. 336.

^{*}RHAI, I, p. 150 ff.

See Sharma, R.S., Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India, 1983, Ch. VIII; Shastri, A.M., India as seen in the Brhat-Samhitā of Varāhamihira; Yadava, B.N.S., Presidential Address for Section I, Ancient India, Indian History Congress, 1980.

belief that for an integrated development of human personality a synthesis of the path of activism (pravṛtti) and the path of renunciation (nivṛtti) is necessary. Referneces to both the ways are found throughout the epic-Paurāṇika literature. In the Mbh. Yudhishthira proclaims the excellence of nivṛtti while his brothers and Draupadī insist on the need for leading a life of strenuous activity (pravṛtti). In the epic-Paurāṇika age the classic exposition of complete renunciation as the path of self-realization is attributed to Śaṅkara while pravṛtti dharma is best expounded in the Smṛtis of Manu etc. The path of nivṛtti had little sympathy for society; its prime object was to seek individual self-realization. The path of pravṛtti advocated that one could attain perfection only by discharging all his social and individual obligations arising out of his station in life (svadharma of the Gītā—duties enjoined by one's varṇa and āśrama).

The Hindu theory of trivarga (dharma, artha and kāma—roughly translated as morality, material wealth and desires) elaborated by the addition of moksha (emancipation) into the doctrine of the four purushārthas was the result of the synthesis of the paths of pravṛtti and nivitti. It was a recognition of the need for considering carefully the personal as well as the social aspects of man-in-society. None of the four ends-dharma, artha, kāma and moksha-can be realized apart from life in society. Artha as a value cannot be realized by isolated individuals; it gets singificance only in social context. Same is the case with kāma. But both these are to be regulated by dharma if an individual is to keep the good of society in his mind. Moksha is a more personal goal; but it can also be realized only after one fulfils the demands of social morality. The first three purusharthas are regarded as means-values or instrumentvalues while moksha is intrinsic- or end-value. Considering artha and kāma as ends-in-themselves woud make man self-indulgent and oblivious to the interests of others.1

Emphasis on Pravṛtti Dharma, Gṛhasthāśrama and Svadharma in the epic-Paurāṇika Religion

However, the attitude of the Epics and Purāṇas was unmistakably in favour of pravṛtti dharma and grhasthāśrama. They glorify

¹Gopalan, op. cit.

the service rendered to one's parents and relatives. Obedience to one's parents is said to be productive of all fruits of dharma. In the Kūrma P. people are advised not to do anything against the will of their parents. In the Padma P. parents and guru are called tirthas.

In order to strengthen the basis of Hindus family organisation the Epics and Purāņas give emphas is on chastity of women. narrate stories about the supernatural powers of the chaste and devoted wives (satīs). For instance one may refer to the story of the Mārkandeya P. about the Brāhmana leper and his wife.

Though the Puranas recognise that final emancipation is attainable only through nivitti dharma, unlike the Buddhists and the Jainas they do not preach that anybody and everybody should accept sannyāsa without caring whether he is fit for it or not, because such a practice is very harmful to society. This ideology had earlier been preached by the Epics. The Purānas also advocate that a person should generally pass through the different āśramas performing the duties enjoined by the Smrtis in order to reach the stage of sannyasa. In the Markandeya P. Prajapati Ruchi, who is bent on attaining moksha performs acute penance. But his Pitrs appear before him and convince him that marriage and the performance of the daily duties of a householder are necessary for freeing oneself from the debts (rnas) one owes to the gods, fathers, men and others. In the Devībhāgavata P. Śuka, who looks upon the first three āśramas as obstacles to the attainment of emancipation is instructed by Janaka to pass through all of them in order to loose attraction for the world, because 'the man who is totally free from worldly attachment is entitled to take up sannyāsa, not otherwise'. The Matsya P. says: The 'holy places (tirthas) are said to be in the houses of those who (abide by the rules) of Varnāśrama'. The Kūrma P. states: 'The grhastha is the source of the (other) three asramas. Others live on him. Therefore, the grhastha is the best (of all)'.

Various and interesting means were adopted by the authors of the Puranas to establish and popularise the varnaśramadharma. Firstly often the sages, even gods and goddesses themselves, are made to praise the varnāśramadharma as the means of attaining

¹RHAI, I, p. 102 f.

the sectarian gods. For instance, in the Vishnu P. when being asked by king Sagara as to how Vishnu can be worshipped. Aurva says: "The Supreme Being is worshipped by him who is loyal to the duties required by his own caste and stage of life." Secondly, to warn the people against violating the rules of the varnāśramadharma the Purāņas invented numerous stories which show the results of such violation. For example, in the Matsya P. the sons of Raji, who accept the Jina-dharma after giving up the Vedic Dharma, are killed by Indra. In the Vishnu P. Vena is killed by the sages for his neglect of the varnāśramadharma, and the demons, who become powerful by practising the Vedic religion are deluded by Māyāmoha only to be defeated and killed by the gods. Thirdly, the Puranas narrate horrifying details of hells where sinners are punished with the utmost cruelty for neglecting the varnaśramadharma and the general rules of morality. Fourthly, the Puranas popularised the stories about those who suffered for giving up their own caste or āśrama dharma (svadharma). In the Vāmana P. Sukeśin, king of the Rākshasas, gives up his svadharma and accepts paradharma (i.e. mānavadharma). As a result, his moving city is brought down to earth by Sūrya. The concept of the performance of svadharma implied that for women service of their husbands and for the Sūdras service of the twice-born are the means of attaining the highest regions. According to the Vishnu P. once the sages were unable to decide the question as to when Dharma, though practised little, is capable of producing the greatest result. They went to Vyāsa for a solution. They found him bathing in the Gangā and heard him shouting, "Excellent, excellent is the Kali age", "Blessed, blessed are the Sudras" and "Fortunate are women" each time he dived. The sages asked him the cause of his exclamation. Vyāsa explained that all these three are fortunate because in the Kali age duty is discharged with very little trouble by mortals whose faults are all washed away by the water of their individual merits, by Südras through diligent attendance only upon the dvijas, and by women through slight effort of obedience to their husbands.

¹See Sharma, R.S. 'Co-references to Woman and Śūdra in Early Literature', Perspectives in Social and Economic History of Early India, New Delhi, 1983, Ch. V, p. 45 ff.

Pūrtadharma (Social Service)

The new interpretation of rituals and sacrifices had a corresponding effect on ethical practices. It gave a wider and social True religious life has a mission in meaning to religion. the world. A truly religious person, according to the epic-Paurāņika tradition, is always deeply interested in the welfare of all created beings. According to the Gītā (V. 25) the seers whose sins have been washed away, whose doubts have been dispelled by knowledge, whose mind is firmly established in God, and who are actively engaged in promoting welfare of all beings (sarvabhūta hite ratāḥ) attain Brahmanirvāņa. For such a person serving humanity becomes a second nature. He does so without the least exertion.

The term 'social service' is a comparatively new one. Before the 20th century, it meant philanthropy and charity. The Hindus of the epic-Paurānika age also insisted on philanthropy and charity. The Puranas lay the greatest emphasis on what is called pūrtadharma, works of public utility, charity, social service and relief of the poor and distressed. The word Ishtapurta occurs in the RV once (X.14.8) and in several of Upanishads in the sense of the works of public utility. The Amarakośa defines ishta as sacrifice and includes in pūrta such works as digging a well or tank. A similar meaning of the word purta is given in the various Puranas. For example, according to the Markandeya P. digging wells and tanks and building temples and distribution of food to those who need it are purta works. The law books prescribe stringent punishment for those who cause damage to water tanks.2 The Mbh. describes how parks should be laid out and tanks constructed with trees on their banks.3 The Varāha P. and some Smṛtis go so far as to declare that a man secures only heaven by ishta but obtains moksha by pūrta. It is here significant to remember that while ishta dharma was open only to dvijas, pūrta dharma could be performed by the Sūdras and women also. In several Puranas removal of suffering and distress of others is described as the highest dharma. In the Markandeya P. it is said that 'men do not obtain that happiness in heaven or in the Brahmaloka

¹Kane, *HD*, V, ii, p. 947.

²Sharma, op. cit., p. 158.

³Kane, op. cit., p. 948.

which springs from giving relief to the distressed'. The Vishņu P. recommends that a wise man should say and do only that which is for the benefit of creatures here and hereafter. The Skanda P. opines that there is no dharma higher than doing good to others and there is no sin greater than harming others. The Bhagavata P. even declares that men have ownership over only that much as would fill their belly; he who thinks as his own what is more than that is a thief.1

Dānas (Gifts)

Though huge gifts used to be made to the Brahmanas in the Vedic age also and works like the Aitareya Brāhmaņa refer to great gifts made to priests by early kings,2 there is no evidence to show that any vigorous propoganda was made by the Brahmanas to popularize the piety of making gifts earlier than the time of the Yājñavalkya Smṛti. Nor do the Vedic people seem to have been familiar with the great variety of gifts that are advocated by the Mbh. and the Puranas.3 As pointed out by Hazra, in the work of pre-Yājñavalkya period there is mention of the simple gifts of land, gold, silver, cows, horses, slave-girls, houses, clothes, food, drink etc., but in the Puranas the Brahmanas take advantage of the belief of the people in the merits of making gifts of cows etc. to multiply the number of gifts by many new inventions. For instance, they speak of the gifts of artificial cows made of paddy, guda, sesamum, water, ghee, etc; of hillocks made of gold, silver, gems, salt, sesamum, ghee, sugar, cotton etc.; of Tula-purusha, Kalpapādapa,4 Kāmadhenu, horse, earth, horse and chariot, elephant and chariot, five ploughs, kalpa-latā, cows, etc.—all made of

¹¹bid., p. 949. Cf. Proudhon's doctrine 'property is theft'.

²Hazra, op. cit., p. 247; cf. Gonda, J., "Gifts' and 'Giving' in the Rgveda', Visheshvaranand Indological Journal, 11, Pt. 1, 1964, pp. 9-30.

^{*}Hazra, Ibid. The Mbh. at numercus places, particularly in the Anusasanaparvan and the Matsya (ch. 82-92, 274-89), Agni (ch. 208-13), Vāraha (ch. 90-111), Padma (V.21, 81-213, 11.39.40, 94; 111.24) and Karma (11.26) Puranas discuss the various danas in detail (Kane, HD, V, ii, p. 934).

The fact that Khāravela, a king of the first century B.C., claims to have given Kalpapādapas in gifts, (Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 363) proves that some of these gifts had become popular in the pre-Christian period.

gold; marriage expenses and so forth. Many of these gifts were quite costly and could be given only by kings or extremely rich people. However the gift of food highly acclaimed in the Purāṇas could be given by all easily.

The Puranas make great attempt to popularise the practice of making gifts. They advocate that making gifts is the only piety in the Kali age. Gifts give pleasure to the donor both in this life and the next. A giver of gifts obtains health, wealth, a beautiful wife, and children on earth, and after death, easily attains the highly desired regions named Brahmaloka, Vishņuloka etc.3 The Purāņas fabricate stories of kings and others who made gifts with great effect. They impart a semblance of holiness and importance to the topic of gifts by calling it 'secret' (guhya, rahasya) and 'old' (purātana). Further, these teachings are always ascribed to some prominent god or sage in order that they may have unquestionable authority. Sometimes the Paurānika Brāhmanas become so greedy for gifts that they call upon the kings to force people to be charitable to them, in normal times as well as in famines. In the Kūrma P. the king is advised to confiscate the belongings of a man and banish him from his kingdom if the latter does not, after earning money, satisfy the gods and the Brahmanas.4

In order to monopolise such gifts for the orthodox Brāhmaṇas the Purāṇas advise the people not be liberal to those Brāhmaṇas and non-Brāhmaṇas who follow other religions. However it must be accepted that inspite of all their preachings for gifts, the Brāhmaṇas never gave up the ideal of leading a life of simplicity and asceticism and got due respect for this from society. As pointed out by Kane, all Brāhmaṇas in ancient times were not priests and Manu (III.152) looks down upon a Brāhmaṇa who worked as a temple-priest. The ideal set before the Brāhmaṇas was of poverty, plain living and high thinking.⁵

Upavāsas, Vratas and Utsavas

The most striking characteristic of the epic-Pauranika religon is the emphasis on how great rewards and results could be secured,

¹Hazra, op. cit., p. 247. ²Cf. Kane, HD, II, pp. 856-58 for references to donations to Brāhmaņas of horses and marriage-expenses.

^{*}Hazra, op. cit., p. 249 f.

^{*}Ibid., p. 251 f.
5Kane, op. cit., p. 936.

specially by women and Śūdras, with very little effort. As noted above, in the Vishnu P. Vyāsa explains that the acquisition of dharma is secured with small trouble in the Kalı age by men who wash off all their sins by water in the form of the qualities of their soul; by Sūdras who do the same by being intent on service to dvijas and by women who secure dharma without trouble by rendering service to their husbands.¹

In persuance of the same tendency the Mbh. and the Purahas praise fasts, viratas and utsavas. The term virata, according to R.S. Sharma, may indicate tribal customs. But in the post-Vedic times it came to mean 'religious vow or undertaking', either obligatory or expiatory. From the early Christian period the difference between vrata and prayaschitta became thin. For example, Chandrayana vrata is a prayaschitta also. In the pre-Gupta age the number of vratas was limited. In the Gupta and post-Gupta periods the situation changed. According to Kane, there is no topic of Dharmsastra, except probably that of tirthayatra and sraddha, on which the Puranas are so eloquent as on vrata. On a modest calculation the Puranas contain about 25,000 verses on vratas which in the list of the Vratakosa are 1,622 in number. Though Kane reduces the number of these Vratas to about 1000 by weeding out repetitions, yet even this figure is staggering if we remember that a year consists of 360 days only. The social base of these vratas was much wider becaues these could be performed by women and Sūdras aiso.3

The Regredic word for festivals is samana which also meant 'battle'. They were usually named after the month in which they were held and were celebrated in honour of the various gods, snakes etc. One of the most popular festivals seems to have been Indramahotsava or Indramaha. In the early historical period the word samaja was used in the sense of festival. The Mbh., the Sūtra literature and the inscriptions of Aśoka and Khāravela refer to the various samājas. The early Buddhist and Jaina literatures also contain numerous references to mahas and samājas. The Mbh.

¹*HD*, V, ii, p. 929. ²*HD*, V, i, p. 57.

³Chatterji, A.K., 'Religious Festivals of Ancient India', Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 46 ff.

Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 36 f. blbid., p. 361.

refers to festivals held in the honour of Pasupati, Brahmā etc. and the Ayārānga Sutta refers to festivals held in honour of Mukunda (Vishnu), Skanda, Indra, snakes, etc. The Vasantotsava is frequently mentioned in the classical Sanskrit texts such as the Daśakumāracharita, the Kathāsaritsāgara, the Mudrārākshasa, etc. According to the Bhavishyottara P. it was held in honour of the demoness Hodikā. Many other festivals are described in these texts.²

As pointed out by Kane, it is difficult to draw a strict line between vratas and utsavas; what are called utsavas (festivals) have also an element of religious rites and conversely many a vratas have some elements of a festival.3 According to the Mbh. vratas and fasts are equal to sacrifices in the matter of rewards. In the Padma P. they are regarded as superior to sacrifice. By performing a sacrifice one may go to heaven, but one who observes Karttikavrata goes to Vaikuntha. Nṛga, who was a Śūdra in his previous birth, became a king in the next birth by virtue of the observance of the Buddhadvādaśīvrata. Bhadrāśva, who served a Vaiśya in his earlier birth, became king by burning a lamp throughout the night in a Vishnu temple on the dvadaśi of the śuklapaksha of the month of Aśvin. The Brahma P. says that the reward secured by worshipping sun for a single day cannot be obtained by hundreds of Vedic sacrifices. Extolling the Jayantivrata the Padma P. states that in the body of its performer all holy places and deities reside. The Bhavishya P. declares that a man crosses the deep ocean of hells by means of the boats of vratas, upavasas and niyamas. According to the Mbh. one who does not eat on the Ekādaśī of both the fortnights does not go to hell. In the Varāha P. in reply to the question 'how can a poor man reach God' it is said that he can do so by vratas and fasts. The Brahma P. remarks that by merely taking the name of Keśava, in Kaliyuga a man obtains the same rewards that one got in Kṛtayuga by deep meditation, in Treta by performing sacrifices and in Dvāpara by the worship of images. Thousands of such statements from the Epics and the Puranas may easily be culled together. The keynote of all of them is how one can secure great rewards with the help of vratas upavāsas, etc.

¹Chatterji, A.K., op. cit., p. 53.

^{*}Ibid.

^aKane, HD, V, i, p. 57.

Tīrthayātrā (Pilgrimage)

Tīrthayātrās also played an important role in the epic-Paurānika religion. Today, spread over whole of the Indian sub-continent are innumerable tīrthas. Some of them grew around ancient legends and hero-cults, but most of them are said to have been sanctified by particular gods and goddesses. These are usually situated by the side or on the confluence of rivers or on mountains, or by the sea side. According to one view the introduction of plough cultivation was the basic factor responsible for the rise and growth of tīrthas. According to another view ancient towns retained their identity as tīrthas when they declined in early medieval times. According to R.S. Sharma the proliferation of tīrthas was caused by several factors—rapid formation of new states, betterment of agricultural techniques, fresh settlements and colonisation of Brāhmaṇas, decline of ancient cities, etc. Many tīrthas seem to have had Tāntrika origin.

The word tirtha occurs frequently in the RV and other Samhitas. In some passages it means 'road' or 'way'. At other places it probably means a holy place or river. In the RV waters and certain specific rivers are referred to with great reverence as holy. At one place in this text aranyani (forest) is also invoked as a deity. However, even by the age of the Sutras and early Smrtis tirthas had not acquired a prominent position. But in the Epics and the Puranas they are highly lauded and placed even above sacrifices. The Vanaparvan of the Mbh. contrasts the two as follows: "the solemn sacrifices promulgated by the sages cannot be accomplished by a poor man. Going to holy places confers merits and surpasses sacrifices". The Puranas are full of such sentiments and of eulogies of numerous tirthas described in them. According to the list of tirthas given by Kane, their number shot up to about 4,000 in medieval times. In his opinion the literature on tirthas is far more

¹Bhattacharji, S., The Indian Theogony, p. 352.

²Upadnyay, G.P., 'The Origin and Function of Tirthas—Some Epic and Purānic Testimonies', PIHC, 1976, pp. 126-131; cf. also Bhardwaj, S.M., Hindu Places of Pilgrimage in India, Los Angeles, 1973, pp. 30-9.

²Nandi, R.N., 'Client, Ritual and Conflict in Early Brahmanical Order', The Indian Historical Review, VI, pp. 103-9.

⁴Sharma, R.S., op. cit., p. 236f.

HD, V, p. 730-825.

extensive than on any other single topic of the Dharmasastra. In his very modest calculation there are atleast 40,000 verses on tīrthas in the epics and the Purāṇas.

Temple and Matha Organisation

In the epic-Paurāņika religion religious institutions such as temples, mațhas, agrabāras, brahmadeyas, etc. played an important role. The hierarchical organisation of the Buddhist vihāras became more or less the model for such institutions. To some extent they assumed feudal character also. The impact of the temple organisation on the early Bhakti movement is yet to be worked out in detail, but after an in-depth study of the temple base of the Bhakti movement of South India, K. Veluthat1 has drawn some interesting conclusions. He has shown that the leaders of the Tamil Bhakti movement were essentially leading a temple movement the centre of which shifted from Pallava to Chola territory. Secondly, the Nāyanārs and Alvars largely addressed their hymns to the deities consecrated in temples which shows the indebtedness of their ideology to this institutional base. Thirdly, the temples developed into the pivot round which the major economic, political and social activities of the locality revolved. Each temple was also a centre of learning, a place of entertainment and even a place of refuge. Fourthly, the temple was a landed magnate (and a big employer) in early medieval India. It also played the role of merchant guilds. Thus, the temples of the Paurāņika age played a multidimensional role in society.2

¹Veluthat, K., 'The Temple Base of the Bhakti Movement', PIHC, 1979, p. 184 ff.

²Ibid. Cf. also D.D. Kosambi, An Introduction to the Study of Indian History, Bombay, 1975, pp. 395-405; Sharma, R. S., Indian Feudalism, Calcutta, 1965.

Chapter 6

Vaishnavism: Vishnu-Narayana and the Pancharatra

Names of the Sect

The most important of the devotional Paurāṇika sects was Vaishṇavism, evidently named after Vishṇu, also called Bhagavat, Nārāyaṇa, Hari, Vaikuṇṭha, etc. The Padma Tantra, a Pāñcharātra Saṁhitā, enumerates Sūri, Suhṛt, Bhāgavata, Sāttvata, Pañchakālavit, Ekāntika, Tanmaya and Pāñcharātrika as the different names of this cult. In this list the term Vaishṇava does not occur. Varāhamihira also uses the term Bhāgavata, and not Vaishṇava, to denote this system, and the imperial Guptas describe themselves in their inscriptions as Paramabhāgavatas. The Mbh. also uses the name Vaishṇava only in its latest sections. All these facts indicate that the Paurāṇika cult-name Vaishṇava had not been much in vogue even in the early centuries of the Christian era.

As regards the names enumerated in the Padma Tantra, Sātvata or Sāttvata was one of the several names of the tribe to which Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa belonged. When his cult spread to other communities, the name of his tribe became a general designation of his worshippers. The words Ekāntin and Tanmaya were probably coined by the devotees of Vishṇu-Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva to emphasize their single minded (ekāntika) and devoted (tanmaya) attitude towards their deity. Some distant connection of the term Sūri has been sought by D.C. Sircar with the Sūris of the RV (supra, p. 89) who aspired to have knowledge of the paramapada of the Vedic Vishṇu, and the term Suhṛt probably alludes to Arjuna who was regarded as one of the closest freinds (suhṛt) of

¹Banerjea, J.N., Puranic and Tantric Religion, p. 18.

²Cf. Jaiswal, Suvira, The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, 1967, p. 40.

Kṛṣhṇa.¹ The worship pers of the latter were probably absorbed in the larger body of the Kṛṣhṇa bhaktas (infra). The significance of the term Pañchakālavit is not yet known but the names Pañcharātra and Bhāgavata were undoubtedly authoritative designations of the cult. These are respectively connected with the pañcharātra sattra of Nārāyaṇa and the conception of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa as Bhagavat.

Vishnu in the Rgveda

The etymology of the name Vishnu has been a matter of considerable speculation. M. Bloomfield and H. Oldenberg were inclined to explain it as 'crossing the back of the world or the earthly regions'. Bloch and other scholars believed the name to contain the suffix snu and the element vi- 'bird'. K. F. Johansson considers Vishnu almost identical with a large bird. R.N. Dandekar defends Bloch's view. However, Johansson's opinion, on which he relies, viz. that Vishnu originally was the sunbird, is regarded by J. Gonda as far from convincing. Przyluski feels that Vishnu, who has no counterpart in Indo-European mythology, was pre-Aryan.² According to S.K. Chatterji also the name Vishnu is of Dravidian origin being drived from the Dravida root vin.3 However, the authors of Puranas made the word mean 'who enters or pervades (viz. the universe)' and J. Gonda finds much truth in this interpretation. "The frequency of the terms conveying the ideas of permeating and penetrating", he argues, "of distribution and spatial extensiveness, the identification with virāj—, i.e. the idea of extending far and wide, which is at the same time regarded as the totality or sum of all existence and often identified with srī-or 'prosperity' point in the same direction as Visnu's famous striding activity".4

Vishņu worship is as old as the Rgveda. In this text he is one of the Ādityas or manifestations of the Sun.⁵ In a Rgvedic passage he is called the germ of 'order' or 'sacrifice'—Rtasya garbham (I. 156.3). He also figures as a leader in battle. He is

¹Cf. Sircar, D.C., 'Early History of Vaisnavism', CHI, IV, pp. 108-145.

²For references, vide J. Gonda, Aspects of Early Visnuism (AEV) Delhi, 1969, p. 4, n. 11.

³It is significant to note that on same of the Indus seals are depicted chakra and svastika, which in later ages became associated with Vaishnavism.

Gonda, op. cit., p. 172.

⁵Cf. Shende, N. J., 'Vișnu as Āditya', AIOC, XX.

specially praised with Indra, the two being looked upon as rulers of the world (VI. 69; VII, 99). His greatness is described as inconceivable, and he is revered under the title 'Sipivishta' (VII. 100. 5-6) literally meaning 'bald'. His three strides, two called earthly and one, the highest, known only to himself (I.155.5). are his most important feat. Vishnu's highest place is the realm of spirits (I.154.5-6; X.15.3) where he departed dwells. From this it is obvious that Vishnu was not a very important deity in the Early Vedic age. Keith is no doubt right in observing that denying to Vishnu the position of a great god in the period of the RV would be to forget that the comparative importance of the various gods is not necessarily fully brought out in this text. Ruben also suggests that Vishnu became a great god in post-Vedic times because a deity of his character and functions was already important in pre-Aryan India. But even then it can hardly be denied that in the RV Vishnu is more concerned with sacrifice than devotion and does not belong to the category of the great deities. He was not regarded by anybody as the greatest God. His inferiority to Indra appears even in the Sūktas devoted to his own glorification. In RV I.22.19 his greatness rests on his being a worthy friend of Indra-Indrasya yujyaḥ sakhā. The question therefore arises: how comparatively subordinate Vedic deity become the Supreme Being and the Lord of gods of the epic-Paurāņika age?

Factors in the Rise of Vishnu

Scholars have answered this question variously. Hopkins opines that Vishņu's later popularity lay in the importance of his 'highest place or step', the home of the departed spirits where he himself is said to dwell. For L. Von Schroeder the secret of the victory and vitality of the triad Brahmā-Vishņu-Śiva consists in their representing the three main roots of religion and in the harmonious way in which they supplement each other. According to Gonda² however the ascendancy of Vishnu was a coming to the surface of the beliefs of those masses whose voice is but imperfectly heard in the RV. As we have ourselves seen³, the people of ancient India which

¹AEV, p. 3.

²Ibid., p. 5.

^{*}RHAI, I, Ch. 5.

were within the sphere of Aryan influence, varied from each other by different racial and social origins and beliefs and customs. The differences in the degree of their civilization, ethnically, locally and temporally, were reflected in the forms of their religion. We have also shown that the religion of the 'Aryan world' before coming into contact with the Austric and Dravidian people was not at all homogeneous. The concept of Vishņu might have therefore originally belonged to a non-Vedic or partly Vedic community. But, as Gonda rightly observes, "all that has been said on this point is of a more or less speculative character and.....any effort to represent mere possibilities as certainty or even as an hypothesis must be distrusted".1

The Rgvedic Vishnu lacked features which could be developed into the attributes of a major god. Not only is he a minor god with only a few hymns but his achievements have very little mythological potentiality. It is only in the Brāhmaņas that his stature rises though even now he is far from being regarded by any section of the Aryan society as the only God. In a passage of the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa he is called Devānām dvārapaḥ (I.30)—'the door-keeper of the gods', which can hardly be regarded as a complimentary epithet.2 The doctrines of Bhakti and grace are also as yet unassociated with him. In the Brāhmaņas he is more intimately connected with sacrifice than with devotion. Actually his association with yaina was one of the factors that led to his popularity in this period. As noted above, in the RV he is called the germ of sacrifice. The Brāhmaṇas never tire of repeating the formula: 'Vishnu is sacrifice' or 'sacrifice is Vishnu'. In the AB, where he is said to occupy the highest place among the gods, he is one of the 'Dīkshāpālau'—the two guardians of the 'dīkshā' or initiation (I.4). He protects the defects in the sacrifice (from producing any evil consequence), while Varuna protects the fruits arising from its successful performance (III. 38). After the Brāhmanical age Vishnu needed no such prop, for he was already supreme. So the Epics and the Puranas repeat the Yajña-Vishnu equation only rarely.

In the RV Vishnu's fame rests on the three strides with which he crosses heaven (1.22.18). The AB version of the legend

Gonda, op. cit., p. 5. ²EHVS, p. 10.

mentions Indra also with whose help Vishņu deludes the asuras and wins by his three strides the worlds, the Vedas and the Vāk. The Paurāṇika story of the three strides by which the Dwarf Vishņu conquered the three worlds is anticipated in IS where the three places of Vishņu are not, as in the RV, the two points of the horizon and the zenith, but the earth, the air, and the sky. The Śatapatha relates this legend in detail. By the time of the Epies the three strides of Vishņu had become an accepted myth. The Mbh. relates that when Vishņu was taking the three strides he came upon the sage Bharadvāja who smote him on the chest with the water in his hand. It left a mark there. In the Harivamśa the myth is connected with the legend of Bali.

The legend of the three strides has been subjected to various interpretations. According to Wilson there can be little doubt that the three steps of Vishau are the three periods of the sun's course—his rise, culmination and setting.² Colebrooke thought that the taking of three steps might have formed the groundwork of the Paurānika legend of the Dwarf incarnation, but Raychaudhuri and Wilson find no allusion to the notion of avatāras in the Veda.³ J. Gonda connects his three steps with his pervasiveness. "The universe being tripartite", he argues, "the act intimates, in a way, the god's universal character. All beings abide in these three steps".⁴ According to S. Bhattacharji also the MS and TS seem to suggest that his three strides covered the three regions thus establishing his overlordship over the three regions.⁵

In the RV Vishņu assists Indra in his encounters with asuras (RV, VII.99.4), particularly with Vṛtra. In the Mbh. and the Purāṇas Vishņu appropriates many Indra myths. Now Indra becomes a subordinate divinity who can maintain his position only through the grace of Vishņu. In the Epics and Purāṇas Vishņu's war-like activities also become more prominent. In the Rāmā. he is a mighty warrior who killed Tāraka. In the Purāṇas however Tāraka is killed by Kārttikeya. Vishņu also killed Hiraṇyakaśipu,

¹Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 460.

²Cf. Chaubey, B.B., 'Vishnu and His Three Strides', *Indian Philosophy and Culture*, Vrindavan, X, No. 3-4, 1965, pp. 81-85.

³EHVS, p. 7.

Gonda, AEV, p. 172.

⁵Bhattacharji, op. cit., p. 284.

Namuchi, Kālanemi, Rādheya, Hārdikya, Šumbha and Nisumbha. In the *Mbh*. he kills Madhu and Kaiṭabha, Hiraṇyāksha and Hiraṇyakaśipu.

Vishņu's solar identity is clear from the Rgvedic hymns. Of him the SB also says: 'he who is this sacrifice is yonder Āditya'. The Mait. Upa. (VI.16) describes him as the one who shines in the yonder orb. The AV invokes him to give heat, thus proving his solar character. The SB says that Vishņu's head was cut off and became the sun. In the epic-Paurāṇika age also his solar association was kept in mind. In the Mbh. Bhīshma praises Kṛshṇa, an avatāra of Vishṇu, as the sun. In the HV he is called the lord of the Ādityas. The list of the Ādityas varies from text to text, but Vishṇu is included in all of them. In the HV Ghaṇṭākarṇa eulogises Vishṇu as 'the brilliance of the sun'. His orb is the sun by day and the moon by night, says the HV.

Vishņu's solar antecedents are also clear from his association with chakra and Garuḍa. The Vedic and epic-Paurāṇika Vishņu's distinctive weapon was the disc or wheel, the chakra. The RV mentions it and there it undoubtedly stands for the solar disc. The Vedas do not know Garuḍa although they do mention the 'divya suparṇa' (the divine bird). This bird steals or carries Soma. The Soma stealing suparṇa becomes, in later mythology, the amṛta-stealing Garuḍa. Garuḍa became Vishṇu's mount as well ensign. Garuḍa lived on the snakes. Their struggle is a symbolic representation of the struggle between the solar deity and his nāga adversary. Thus Garuḍa, the mount of Vishṇu, becomes a form of Vishṇu himself, just as the bull is a form of Śiva.

The Concept of Nārāyaṇa

The predominance of the Vishņu element in the Vaishņava religion was a later development.³ In the beginning Nārāyaṇa was the more prominent deity. Though both Vishņu and Nārāyaṇa are regarded as one and the same in the Baudhāyana DS, the TA,

¹Cf. Gonda, op. cit., p. 25 ff.

²Cf. Kṛshṇa's victory over Kāliya serpent and Vishṇu's description as sleeping over Śeshanāga.

³Supra. In the Mbh. the term Vaishnava occurs only thrice and that too in a late passage. Similarly the Epic generally refers to Nārāyaṇa, his other name Vishņu being comparatively rare.

several passages of the Mbh., and the later Paurāņika literature, yet originally they were names of different deities. Nārāyana is mentioned for the first time in two passages of the Satapatha Brāhmana. In the first, by means of sacrifice he places himself in all the worlds, the gods, the Vedas, the vital airs, etc. and all things are placed in him. The other passage states that by performing the pañcharātrasattra Nārāyaņa gained superiority over all beings. and 'became all beings'. The Purushasūkta is said to his litany. Obviously, already in the age of the SB Nārāyaṇa was a deity of eminence.

According to some scholars Nārāyaṇa is a gotra name derived from Nara.1 It means that originally Nārāyaņa was a deified sage or leader of thought born in the family of another sage Nara. Both of them were advocates of solar worship, which led to their identification with the Sun-god Vishņu. Against this it has been objected that (a) in the Mbh. the sage Nara is born out of the austerities performed by Nārāyaṇa, and not vice versa; (b) there is no evidence to show that Nara or Nārāyaṇa ever preached solar worship; and (c) the Satapatha, which is the earliest source to mention Nārāyaṇa, speaks of him as a god and not a human being (cf. the statement 'he became all beings). The argument of S.N. Dasgupta² that the human character of Nārāyana is implied in the passage which states that Nārāyana gained transcendence and immanence after celebrating the pancharatra sacrifice, "does not stand scrutiny, for even Prajāpati-Brahmā and Brahmā-Svayambhū are described as having acquired their powers through sacrifice in this work, and the divine character of these deities can hardly be questioned".3

According to another theory Nārāyaņa was a deity of Dravidian origin.4 His name may be derived from the three Dravidian words $n\bar{a}r$ -ay-an. The first is equated with Dravidian $n\bar{i}r$ meaning water, ay means 'to lie in a place', while an is a Dravidian personal termination. But Suvira Jaiswal rightly points out that this view is is based on the unproved presumption that the name Nārāyaņa must refer to the conception of the deity as lying on waters.

¹Barnett, The Hindu Gods and Heroes, pp. 6-8; Sircar in AIU, p. 437. ²Dasgupta, S.N., A History of Indian Philosophy, III, p. 12. ³Jaiswal, Suvira, The Origin and Development of Vaisnavism, New Delhi, 1967, p. 33. ⁴Kenny, L.B., *ABORI*, XXIII, pp. 250-6.

Following R.G. Bhandarkar, Suvira Jaiswal has herself explained the origin of the concept of Nārāyana with the help of the Udyogaparvan and of the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. which state that the godhead is the refuge of all men, and so he is known as Nārāyaņa. Nārāyaņa means the place where narāh go. The intrinsic and inseparable relation of Nārāyana with Nara, the Man, she argues, gave rise to the myth of Nara and Nārāyaņa being constant associates and companions. It is further indicated by the SB which identifies him with Purusha, the Primeval Man, and describes him as Purusha-Nārāvana. It narrates that Purusha-Nārāyaņa conceived the idea of the pañcharātrasattra with a desire to overpass all beings and become everything and his five-days sacrificial session is described as the Purushamedha, the immolation of man. "If Nārāyaņa signified the collectivity of man, it was for the good of the whole tribe that a human being was killed, originally to provide food for the entire community of men, and later for ritual purposes".2

The conception of Nārāyaṇa as a god embodying the whole universe was, S. Jaiswal opines, a logical development from the earlier meaning denoting 'the dwelling-place or a resort of collection of men'. The idea of the viśvarūpa of the deity popularised by the Gītā might have also been originally associated with Nārāyaṇa. The Āraṇyakaparvan of the Mbh. describes the myth of sage Mārkaṇḍeya's entry into the mouth of Nārāyaṇa and his vision of the whole universe as existing inside the body of the god. It may be a prototype of the cosmic form of the deity shown to Arjuna in the Gītā 3

Nārāyaṇa is sometimes identified with Prajāpati-Brahmā. In its account of creation the *Manusmṛṭi* identifies him with Brahmā.

¹Bhandarkar, R.G., Vaisnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems, pp. 42-3.

²Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 35. We, however, do not agree with her opinion that Nārāyaṇabali, mentioned in some Gṛhyasūtras, was a remnant of some earlier ritual in which human beings were offered to Nārāyaṇa, because according to our texts it was performed for those who died unnatural death. We also do not agree with her interpretation of the title bhagavat (op. cit., p. 37 ff.) and also with the suggestion that it originally belonged to Nārāyaṇa.

³Jaiswal, S., op. cit., p. 36. It is more probable that it is an imitation of the cosmic form conceived in the Gita.

The creation myths of the Vāyu P. also identify the two deities at several places. In a passage of this Purāṇa, Brahmā in answer to a question of god Vishṇu explains that he is Nārāyaṇa, the creator of the world. The Vishṇu P. mentions Brahmā as one who is known as Nārāyaṇa. The Brahmāṇḍa P. identifies Brahmā and Nārāyaṇa at three places, and the Mārkaṇḍeya speaks of him as Brahmā's own form. Later, when the popularity and prestige of Nārāyaṇa reached its peak, Brahmā became a subordinate divinity, who is produced out of the greatest of gods and stands on his navel.¹

Nārāyaṇa in the Mahābhārata

The Mbh. gives several different accounts of Nārāyaṇa. some passages he is called an ancient rshi, the son of Dharma, commonly connected with Nara. Nara and Nārāyaṇa are usually identified with Arjuna and Vāsudeva. In Mbh. V. 48-49 Brahmā tells gods about Nara and Nārāyana who had come from the world men to the world of Brahmā. Worshipped by the gods and the gandharvas they exist for the destruction of the asuras. Indra obtained the boon that they would assist him in the battle against demons. In Mbh. VII. 200. 57-8 it is said that for some purpose the Creator of the universe took birth as Nārāyaṇa, the son of Dharma and underwent austerities for thousands of years. Siva granted him boon that nobody, even Siva himself, should ever be able to withstand his prowess. Nārāyaņa then walked over the earth as Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva. From his austerities was born a great muni Nara, who was equal to Nārāyana himself. Arjuna was none else than that Nara. The two Rshis take birth in every Yuga for the benefit of the world. Elsewhere the Mbh. states that in the Krta Age Nārāyaņa took birth as the son of Dharma in a quadruple form, namely Nara, Nārāyaņa, Hari and the self-create Kṛshṇa. Amongst them all, Nara and Nārāyaņa underwent the severest austerities by repairing to a Himalayan retreat. Later, Nārāyana took away amrta from the asuras and made Garuda his vehicle and emblem.

In the Mbh. the ancient sage Nārāyaṇa is also identified with the sage Kapila of old. This identification was perhaps due to the influence of Bhāgavatism in which Kapila was regarded as the fifth incarnation of Vishṇu.

¹¹bid., p. 48 f.

In the episode of the Svetadvīpa Nārāyaņa is the name of the god of the White Islanders (Mbh. XII. 336.27-55). "On the northern shores of the ocean of milk there is an island of great splendour called by the name of White Island. The men that inhabit that island have complexion as white as the rays of the moon and are devoted to Nārāyaņa". "Incapable of being seen, in consequence of his dazzling effulgence, that illustrious deity can be beheld only by those persons that in course of long ages succeed in devoting themselves wholly and solely to Him".1

Meaning of Pāncharātra

Pāñcharātra as a name of the devotees of Nārāyaņa occurs for the first time in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. which also speaks of Nārāyana as Pañcharātrika. Obviously the epithet should mean the performer of the pancharatra sacrifice mentioned in the SB and this suggests the source from which the name of his devotees is derived. The Pancharatra Samhitas themselves do not agree about the real meaning of the word. According to the Nārada Pāncharātra, rātra means knowledge (rātram cha jnānavachanam) hence Pancharatra is a system which deals five kinds of knowledge (jñānam pañcha vidham smrtam)—of ontology (tattva), liberation (muktiprada), devotion (bhaktiprada), yoga (yaugika), and senses (vaishayika). The İśvara Samhitā relates that the religion was taught by Nārāyaņa to five sages, Śāṇdilya, Aupagāyana, Mauñjāyana, Kauśika and Bhāradvāja, in five successive days and nights. Hence it became known as Pañcharātra. The Śrī-Praśna Samhitā states that rātri means nescience (ajñānam) and pañcha is derived from the root pach to cook or to destroy. Hence Pancharatra is the system which destroys ignorance. According to the Padma Tantra the system is so named because it dispels other five systems which are Yoga, Sāmkhya, Buddhism, Jainism and Pāsupata. The Saktisamgama Tantra however believes that the Pancharatras are designated as such because they observe a vow which enjoins them not to see a Saiva for five successive nights.2

Some other texts have suggested that the Pancharatra is so

¹Cf. Raychaudhuri, H.C., EHVS, p. 68. For details of the Narayaniya section vide Ch. 7.

²Bhatt, S.R., The Philosophy of Päncharatra—An Advaitic Approach, Delhi, Pp. 2-5.

called because the four Vedas and Sāmkhya are combined in it (Nārāyaṇīya), or because it compares the five mahābhūtas which embody the soul with five nights (Agni Purāṇa and Parama Samhitā) or because it dwells upon five sacraments (namely tapa, puṇḍra, nāma, mantra and yoga) or because it advocates five modes of worship (abhigamana, upādāna, ijyā, svādhyāya and yoga), or because it shows reverence to the five Vṛshṇi heroes—Sankarshṇa, Vāsudeva, Pradyumna, Sāmba and Aniruddha.¹

As the Ahirbudhnya Samhitā is one of the earliest Pāncharātra texts, many scholars such as F. Otto Schrader, Kumarappa, B. Bhattacharya, etc. accept the explanation of the term given in it as the most authentic.² According to it the system which recognises the fivefold forms of the deity, namely the para (transcendent) vyūha (emanatory), vibhava (incarnatory), antaryāmin (immanent) and archā (that which resides in idols and images) forms, is known as Pāncharātra. But the Nārāyaṇīya, the earliest text to mention this cult, shows no acquaintance with the theory of the five forms of the deity. It appears to be a later systematisation when the Pāncharātra philosophy had achieved a high degree of development.

According to Suvira Jaiswal the confusion about the true and initial meaning of the term has been caused by ignoring the obvious. She argues that the ŚB clearly states that the Pāncharātrasattra of Nārāyaṇa was a humān-sacrifice which lasted for five days (as the duration of the sacrifice was counted from the previous night, the word rātra is used). In the Vaitāna Sūtra of the Atharvaveda also the human-sacrifice is a five-day performance. This view agrees well with the theory that the Pāncharātra sect originated in the non-Vedic milīeu.

Relation of Pancharatra with the Vedic Tradition

There has been a keen controversy over the question as to whether the Pāñcharātra is Vedic or non-Vedic in origin and pro-Vedic or anti-Vedic in attitude. Some Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstra writers maintain that there are basic differences between the Vedas and the Pāñcharātra, and that the Pāñcharātra is non-Vedic in origin and

¹Ibid. Cf. also Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 41 ff.

²Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 42 f.

^{*} Ibid., p. 44.

anti-Vedic in attitude, and hence deserves condemnation1 while a long array of Śrī Vaishnava and later Pāncharātra writers make strenuous efforts to disprove the charge of unorthodoxy against it.2 For example Yāmunāchārya refutes it vehemently in his Agama Prāmānya. But strangely enough these āchāryas regard the Vedas sometimes as the root and sometimes the shoots of the Pāñcharātra.3 S.N. Dasgupta believes that the Pāñcharātra doctrines are associated with the Purushasūkta of the RV and the SB^4 while S.R. Bhatt thinks that except the philosophical portion, which is borrowed from the Upanishads and the Sāmkhya-Yoga, the major part of the Pancharatra literature is patently non-Vedic.⁵ The anti-Vedic attitude of the Pāñcharātra is manifest at some places where Vedas are regarded as inferior to the Pāñcharātra. According to Suvira Jaiswal also as opposed to the Bhagavatas, who had accepted the Brāhmanical social order, the Pāncharātras were indifferent to and were perhaps against it.6 It is also generally accepted that the Pāñcharātras had prominent Tāntrika leanings and Tāntrikism, on the whole, was more popular with the lower non-Vedic classes. In order to give a Vedic basis for themselves the Pāñcharātra texts themselves trace the origin of their system from the Ekāyana Śākhā of the RV mentioned in the Chhāndogya Upa.7 But the assumption of any connection between the Ekāyana and the Pāñcharātra is

¹The Kūrma P. calls it contrary to the Śruti and Smṛti. The Skanda, Sāmba, Varāha and Parāśara Purānas are of the same opinion. Some state that Śiva composed the Pancharatra Samhitas to delude the degraded. Bhattoji Dikshita has culled verses from Vasishtha, Linga and Skanda Puranas to prove the anti-Vedic nature of the Pancharatra.

²The Vishnu, Bhāgavata, Nāradīya, Garuda and Padma Purānas, and the Vasishtha, Harīta, Vyāsa, Jamadgni, Parāśara and Kasyapa Smṛtis regard the Pāñcharātra as Vedic.

^aSome Smrtis and Puranas divide the Pancharatra literature into Srauta and Aśrauta parts and discard only the latter. Cf. Bhatta, Siddhesvara, 'Relation of Vaidika and Pancharatra Currents of Thought in the Smrti Period', NPP, 69, No. 3, pp. 403-14.

⁴Cf. Bhatt, S.R., op. cit., p. 12.

⁵Ibid.

Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 45.

⁷The Mbh. states that the Ekäyana path leads one to Hṛshikeśa (Kṛshṇa). The Iśvara Samhitā says that the Ekāyana denotes the worship of Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva.

generally regarded as quite baseless.¹ On the basis of a Mbh. passage also it is held by Hazra that the Pañcharatra was originally non-Vedic and that it was later made consistent with the Vedic teachings.²

Doctrines of the Pancharatra

The earliest available record of the Pāñcharātra ideology is contained in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. which, according to F. Otto Schrader, does not give an impression of being based on first-hand knowledge. Apart from the Nārāyaṇīya we find its exposition in the literature variously named as the Pāñcharātra Upanishads, Pāñcharātra Tantras, Pāñcharātra Agamas, and the Pāñcharātra Samhitās, a major portion of which is now lost. According to Schrader once their bulk amounted to not less than one and a half million ślokas. Traditionally, 108 Samhitās are mentioned. Schrader enumerates 215 and suggests that there may be many more. The Lakshmī Tantra gives the number as 219.

The teachings of the Pancharatra school, and in general of the whole Agama literature, may be devided into four sections. (i) $J\bar{n}ana$: philosophical doctrines regarding God, Nature, individual soul; process of creation, means of liberation, etc. (ii) Yoga: meditation or concentration to obtain release. (iii) $Kriy\bar{a}$: rules to be followed in the making of idols and in the construction and consecration of temples. And (iv) $Chary\bar{a}$: rules of conduct regarding worship, rites, festivals and social duties.

¹Contra, Chakravarti, A.C., 'Doctrine of Ekāyana', JAIH, 1, pp. 99-104. ²Hazra, Purāņic Records, p. 199 ff.

⁸Schrader, F. Otto, quoted by S.R. Bhatt, op. cit., p. 6.

The word Agama is derived from the root gam with prefix ā meaning 'that which has come' or 'that which has been revealed'. The Agamika religion branched off into three schools—Vaishnava, Saiva and Sākta—whose devotees believe that their Agamas were 'revealed' by their respective deities. Some texts, however, explain it differently (cf. Bhatt, S.R., The Philosophy of Pāncharātra—An Advaitic Approach, p. 14, n. 2). The Śabdakalpadruma enumerates the chief characteristics of the Agamas. The followers of the Agamas call them Śruti and regard them as equally or even more authoritative than the Vedas (ibid., p. 19, n. 34).

⁵ Madhavan, 'Pāñcharātra Samhitās and their Philosophy', Vedānta Kesarī, LI, No. 10, 1965, p. 504 ff.

The Pāñcharātra philosophy in the Nārāyaṇīya (cf. Ch. 7) is comparatively simpler than what it is in the Samhitās. The philosophy of the Nārāyaṇīya is a combination of Upanishadic monism, proto-Sāmkya dualism, proto-yoga mysticism, along with the popular worship of a personal God in an ardently devotional spirit, with all the paraphernalia of mythological fancy. In the Samhitā literature the primary concern of the Pāñcharātras is sādhanā or the practical method (kriyā and charyā) of realising the Ultimate Reality.

The Pāñcharātra school believes in one Ultimate Non-dual Reality which possesses in its fundamental nature two aspects, viz., static (nivṛtti) and dynamic (pravṛtti) represented respectively by Brahman and its Śakti. In the description of the former we find an unmistakable influence of the Advaitika tendency, and in the latter that of Sāmkhya. From this S.R. Bhatt concludes that the philosophy of the Pāñcharātra school is much nearer to Advaita than to Viśishṭādvaita.²

The most dominant element and a notable feature of the Pāncharātra Samhitās seems to be the prevalence of Tāntrikism. The Ahirbudhnya Samhitā is full of the Tāntrika lore. It clearly declares that the Pāncharātra is based partly on the Tāntrika system. It believes in the guhya nature of the mantras and regards the world as created through them.³

¹Bhatt, op. cit., p. 8.

²¹bid., p. 9 f.

⁸Ibid.

Chapter 7

Vaishnavism: Vasudeva-Krshna and Bhagavatism

Divine Vāsudeva was Distinct from Krshņa-Vāsudeva

Bhāgavatism was perhaps the most important current of Vaishņavism. It was the authoritative name of the cult centering round the Sātvata chief Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa. It gave new orientation and imparted great strength to Vaishnavism. Indian scholars generally subscribe to the thesis of H.C. Raychaudhari¹ that Kṛshṇa, the son of Vasudeva and hero of the Sātvata sept of the Yādavas, was apotheosised by his tribe which popularised his cult. admit that Krshna of the Satvata tribe has been mentioned as Vāsudeva in such pre-Christian works as the Ghaṭa Jātaka, the Mahābhāshya, the early portions of the Mbh. and the Gītā. Vāsudeva of Pāṇini mentioned in a dvadva compound with Arjuna (supra, p. 96, n. 3) should also be identified with Kṛshṇa. Ghosundi, Besnagar and the Nanaghat inscriptions of the pre-Christian period which mention Vāsudeva, sometimes with Sankarshana, also prove that it was Kishna, the brother of Sankarshana, who was worshipped as Vasudeva. All the same, there appears to be some evidence to suggest that the worship of a divinity named Vāsudeva was prevalent even before the advent of the Krshna cult. D.C. Sircar² dismisses this evidence by suggesting that the Pancharatras invented the myth of a supreme Vasudeva other than Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa, in order to absolve their deity of the misdeeds attributed to the latter in the Mbh. etc. We fail to agree with him. For, how could the belief in a Divine Vasudeva absolve their

¹EHVS, p. 36 ff.

²AIU, p. 440.

deity Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva of the misdceds which his critics attributed to him unless the followers of Bhagavatism adopted the position that their object of worship was Divine Vāsudeva and not Kṛshṇa?

The possibility of a distinction between Divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa was probably first suggested by A. Govindacharya Swamin, and was accepted mutatis mutandis by Charles Elliot, R.G. Bhandarkar and some others.1 The Padma Tantra, a Pāñcharātra text, lays down that the image of the son of Vasudeva should be made like that of the god Vasudeva. Patañjali distinguishes between Divine Vasudeva and Kshatriya Vāsudeva (infra). Further, the Bhāgavatas themselves derive the word Vasudeva not from Vasudeva but from the root vas, 'to dwell' meaning thereby that Vasudeva is one 'who dwells in all beings.'2 A verse of the Vishnu P.3 clearly differentiates between Divine Vāsudeva and Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa, for it states that a part of the god Vāsudeva is established in a twofold manner in the persons of Kṛshṇa and Baladeva. The vyūha doctrine (when it differentiates para Vāsudeva from Vyūha Vāsudeva) also implicitly admits the difference between Divine Vasudeva and its emanation. Above all the Mbh. story of Paundraka Vasudeva, who contested the claim of Krshna for the status of true Vāsudeva,⁵ cannot be explained by any supposition other than that the worship of Divine Vasudeva was prevalent even before the time of Krshna and that Krshna and Paundraka Vasudeva both claimed to be his avatāras, and in the struggle that followed the Vṛshṇi hero emerged victorious.6

Was Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa a Solar or Vegetation Deity?

However it must be conceded that Kṛshṇa, the son of Vasudeva,

¹Swamin, A. Govindacharya, JRAS, 1911, p. 936; Eliot, Charles, Hinduism and Buddhism, II, London, 1921, p. 154; Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 15 f.; Chaturvedi, Parsuram, Vaishnava Dharma, Delhi, p. 21; Gonda, J., AEV, p. 161.

²Jaiswal, S., op. cit., p. 63; cf. Vishnu P., I. 2, 12; Mbh. V. 70, 3; XII, 328, 36; XII. 341. 41.

²Vishņu P., V. 17. 26 (Wilson's ed., p. 431 f.).

⁴ Jaiswal, S., op. cit., p. 64.

⁶Mbh. III. 14.8; HV, III. 91; Vishnu P., V. 34. For other references see ABORI, X, p. 316.

Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Studies in Early Kishna Worship,' Bias in Indian Historiography, ed. by Devahuti, New Delhi, pp. 120-38.

has become so completely identified with Divine Vasudeva that the popular mind is not usually ready to entertain the notion of a difference between the two.1 But the Kṛshṇa saga itself is a conglomeration of several heterogeneous elements.2 He is a warrior, a politician, a preacher, a child-god of some pastoral tribe and a love-god of the popular lore, all rolled into one (cf. p. 99). The diversity of his character has been noticed by a large number of scholars. But whether he was a historical personage or a mythical figure, has been a highly controversial question. On the strength of some late legends several scholars have concluded that Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva was not a human being, but a popular deity whose cult was foisted upon Vishnu. For example, Barth considers Kṛshṇa to be a solar deity.3 Against this Keith' objects: "His name tells seriously against it; the 'dark sun' requires more explanation than it seems likely to receive". Keith himself found in Kṛshṇa a development from one of those vegetation deities that seem to have been so widely worshipped.5 But Kṛshna's connection with cattle is no proof that he was a vegetation deity. The Yamunā region, the scene of Kṛshṇa's childhood, was famous for its cattle wealth even in the Rgvedic age (RV, V.52.17). "May the seven times seven all-potent Maruts, (aggregated as) a single troop bestow upon me hundreds (of cattle): may I possess wealth of cows, renowned upon (the banks of) the Yamunā." A Gobala of Vṛshṇi tribe is mentioned as a teacher in the TS (III, 11.9.3) and the Jaiminiya Upanishad Brāhmaņa (I, 6.1). Kṛshṇa's names Govinda, Gopāla, Gopendra, etc., may really be connected with the epithet gopā meaning

¹Cf. Betai, Ramesh Chandra, S., 'Place of Śrīkṛṣṇa in the Realm of Indian History and Culture', JGJRI, XIX, 1962-3, pp. 159-66.

²For a review of the modern interpretations of the life of Kṛshṇa, vide Majumdar, B.B., Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend, Calcutta, 1969, Ch. VI, pp. 233-65.

Barth, Religion of India, p. 166.

^{*}JRAS, 1908, p. 171.

⁵J. Kennedy believed that Kṛshṇa was a semi-aboriginal deity (JRAS, 1908, p. 506). D.D. Kosambi (Myth and Reality, Bombay, 1962, p. 26) opines, on the basis of a drawing of chakra in a Mirzapur cave of about 800 B.C., that Kṛshṇa was an aborigin. He thinks that the Gītā should be regarded as an interpolation in the Mbh. because Kṛshṇa, as he appears in the Mbh., is singularly ill-suited to propound any moral doctrine.

'protector of cows' or 'herdsman' applied in the RV (I.22.18) to Vishnu. According to the RV (I, 154.6) the highest step of Vishnu is the dwelling of the 'many horned swiftly moving cows'. Raychaudhuri therefore opines that Kṛshṇa's connection with cattle may be a historical trait, or an imposition of a feature of the personality of Vishnu.3

Sources for the Life-History of Krshna

For the life of Kṛshṇa our main sources are: (1) the Chhāndyoga Upa.; (2) the incidental notices in the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali; (3) the Buddhist Ghata Jātaka and the Jaina Uttarādhyayana Sūtra, and (4) the Mbh., the HV, the Purānas and the sectarian Upanishads. But to construct the life of Krshna with the help of the HV or the Puranas or the sectarian Upanishads, which in their present shape are obviously separated by an interval of many centuries, probably more than a thousand years, from his time (infra, p. 179) is obviously not possible. The evidence of the Mbh. also needs to be used with much caution. "Though certain parts of the poem are undoubtedly old and contain genuine historical tradition, yet the date of the work as a whole is not far removed from the age of the Puranas; and it is not always easy to separate the kernel of the epic from the husk". The Jatakas and the Jaina Sūtras are in no sense historical records and stories preserved in them have the stamp of being twisted by the Buddhists and Jainas for their sectarian purposes. The Ghata Jātaka gives a garbled version of the life of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa. According to it Vāsudeva and his brothers were the sons of Kamsa's sister Devagabbhā and her husband Upasāgara. These sons were handed over to a man named Andhakavenhu and his wife Nandagopā, an attendant of Devagabbhā. The Uttarādhyayana Sūtra mentions Vāsudeva as Keśava, and describes him as one of the sixty-three Śalākāpurushas and a contemporary of Arishtanemi, the 22nd Tirthankara, both of whom were princes of the town of Soriyapura (Śauryapura). Keśava's parents were Vasudeva and Devakī,

¹Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index, I, p. 128.

²Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 5.

⁸EHVS, p. 28.

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Arishṭanemi's were king Samudravijaya and Śivā. The story told in the text is a confused one, but Keśava-Vāsudeva's dynastic association is correctly reported.

As regards the Mahābhāshya, it no doubt contains important hints (infra), but being post-Buddhistic its value is considerably less than that of the Chhāndogya Upa. It is from the last work that we can hope to get the most authentic information regarding the founder of the Bhāgavata religion. But before we analyse the evidence of our sources on the life of Kṛṣhṇa it will be better if we delineate the life-history of the epic-Paurāṇika Kṛṣhṇa in brief.²

Outline of the Life-History of epic-Paurānika Kṛshṇa

In the Mbh. and the Puranas Krshna-Vasudeva plays the double role of a not overscrupulous chief of Yādava-Vṛshṇi-Sātvata tribe of Mathurā and a deified teacher and preacher of the Gītā and the Anugīta. The Sātvatas or Vṛshṇis were a famous people in the Brāhmaņic age, and had produced at least one teacher of repute (Gobala Vārshņa) in the early Vedic times. According to the Arthaśāstra of Kautilya the Vṛshṇis were a sangha or 'corporation'. Their political constitution was therefore probably similar to that of the Śākyas among whom Gautama the Buddha was born. The name of Krshna's father was Vasudeva according to the Mbh. and the Uttarādhyayana Sūtra, Vasudeva Ānakadundubhi according to the Puranas and Upasagara according to the Ghata Jātaka.3 The name of his mother was certainly Devakī. The existence of a brother named Baladeva or Sankarshana (born of Rohini) is vouched for by all the authorities. The story of his supernatural birth are too well-known to need any repetition. The Mbh. does not much dwell upon his early life. It is the Harivamsa and other Puranas which give us details about his life as an infant and a cowboy of Vraja. In the HV he kills the ass Dhenuka, the bull-demon Arishta (II. 20) and the horsedemon Keśin (II. 24). He destroys the twin Arjuna trees

¹Ibid.

²Many scholars use the *Indica* of Megasthenes also for this purpose. We however feel that Heracles of Mathurā mentioned in the *Indica* cannot be identified with Kṛshṇa (*infra*, p. 180 ff.).

³EHVS, p. 44.

(Yamalārjuna), slays demon Pralamba, kills the monstress Pūtanā (II. 23), the elephant-demon Kuvalāyapīḍā (II. 29) and the demon Chāṇūra (while Balarāma kills Mushṭika (II. 30). He tears the rope with which he was bound and hence was called Dāmodara (II. 27). He also fought and subjugated the serpent Kālīya. However his greatest deed was killing of Kamsa (III. 128).

Kṛshṇa tells his tribe that Indra was the god of cultivators and not of the nomadic shepherds for whom cattle and mountains were proper objects of worship; so they ought to offer sacrifice to mount Govardhana instead of to Indra. Nanda and others did as they were bidden by him. This greatly annoyed Indra, who ordered his attendant clouds to afflict the cattle of the shepherds with rain and wind. But with the help of Kṛshṇa the cowherds overcame this calamity.

Kṛshṇa fought and defeated Jvara in Bāṇa's capital Śoṇitapura and cut off Bāṇa's thousand arms. In his youth he won many a bride, besides Rukmiṇī (HV, II. 60. 36; II. 41-3). Besides them we hear of the innumerable cow-herdesses (gopīs) with whom he was in love (HV, II. 20). In the Purāṇas we are introduced to Rādhā as his favourite cowherdess ($Vāyu\ P$., 104.52). In the Bhāgavata P. gopīvallabha side of Kṛshṇa's character receives greater attention.

The Kṛshṇa saga had come into existence in its fully developed form-barring probably the Rādhā element but including the gopīvallabha aspect of his personality—by the Gupta age. The Mandasor inscription of 404 A.D. states that with the coming of the rainy season, the festival of Indra began as it was then (i.e. in the past) allowed by Krshna.2 It obviously refers Govardhana episode in which after subduing Indra allowed his worship to continue. The Tusam rock inscription of the fifth century A.D. describes Vishnu as a mighty bee on the waterlily which is the face of Jāmbavatī. Jāmbavatī, the mother of Sāmba, was one of the queens of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa, and the inscription proves complete identification of Vishņu with Kṛshņa. The Jayakhya Samhita eulogises Kṛshṇa in the form of a child, Kālidāsa refers to Vishnu in the form of a gopa and the Mudrārākshasa describes Keśava as the Keśīnisūdana. In the

¹Bhattacharji, S., op. cit., p. 302.

²Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, Meerut, 1984, p. 341 f.

^{*}Fleet, Corpus, III, p. 269.

Pahadpur sculptures of the Gupta period Kṛshṇa's gopikāvilāsa is depicted. Bhāsa in his Bālacharita gives an account of the erotic sports of Kṛshṇa, and Bhāsa belongs to the early centuries A.D. The Vishņu P. also depicts Kṛshṇa's amorous dalliances.

Amalgamation of Human and Mythical Elements in the Krshna Saga

From the above account it is obvious that the personality of Kṛṣhṇa¹ as revealed in the Mbh. and the Purāṇas is a composite one. He appears to have been a historical personage; if the Mahābhārata episode, in whatever form, was a historical fact, Kṛṣhṇa must also be regarded as a historical person. He was obviously a warrior and also a religious teacher—the evidence of the Chhāndogya discussed below proves his existence as a religious thinker. His human character is also menifest in the Ghaṭa Jātaka and the Uttarādhyayana Sūtra. The view that he was a human teacher, not an entirely mythical or legendary person, has been admitted by some of the greatest scholars including R.G. Bhandarkar, B.N. Seal, Bühler, Grierson, Macnicol, Raychaudhuri, B.B. Majumdar and Pusalker. We also concur with this belief.

However it is also obvious that in the epic-Paurāṇika age the personality of Kṛṣhṇa was rendered complex by his identification with the divine Vāsudeva, his recognition as an avatāra of Vishṇu, the super-imposition of a large number of legends and myths some of which were even pre-epical and pre-Upanishadic in origin, the victory of Bhāgavatism over some rival sects giving birth to a large number of stories which were foisted upon his personality, his identification with a child-god and an amorous god, and so on. It is an extremely difficult task indeed to separate the various layers of the tradition so that the gradual evolution of the Kṛṣhṇa saga may be understood.

Kṛshṇa Devakīputra of the Chhāndogya Upanishad

Let us begin our investigation with the analysis of the Chhāndogya tradition about Kṛshṇa Devakīputra in which his humanity is most explicit. The Chhāndogya is one of the oldest and

¹For the different meanings of the term Krshna vide Sarma, M.V. Srirama, 'On the Advent of Śrī Kṛṣṇa', Vedānta Kesarī, Lll, No. 2, 1965, pp. 123-26.

a certainly pre-Buddhist Upanishad. This Upanishad does not pretend to give a biography of Krshna; its reference to him is incidental. It mentions him as Devakiputra and pupil of Ghora Angirasa from whom he learnt how to be free from desires.2 Ghora Āngirasa also appears in the Kaushītaki Brāhmaņa (XXX. 6) as a priest of the sun. Max Müller, Macdonell and Keith, S.K. De, A.D. Pusalker and S. Jaiswal either deny or doubt the identity of Kṛshṇa Devakiputra of the Epic and the Purāṇas with Kṛshṇa Devakiputra of the Upanishad.3 Barth, Raychaudhuri and many others however accept the identity of the two.4 Keith and others point out that in the epic-Paurāņika tradition Sāndīpani and Garga appear as the preceptors of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa instead of Ghora of the Angirasa family. But the pupillage of Kṛshṇa to a sage of the Āngirasa family is referred to in the first century A.D. by Aśvaghosa in his Saudarananda (I.23) who states that taking after their preceptor's gotra Vasubhadra, evidently Vasudeva, became a Gautama. According to Monier-Williams, Gotama is the name of a rshi belonging to the family of Angirasa. Keith remarks that the similarity between the names of the two Kishnas may be a mere accident as in the case of the Patañjalis of the Mahābhāshya and of the Yogasūtra. But in the case of the two Kṛshṇas the similarity extends farther than mere similarity of names.

¹Cf. Goyal, RHAI, I, pp. 41-52; Macdonell, History of Sanskrit Literature, p 226; Hopkins, The Great Epic of India, p. 385; Mitra, R.L., Intro. to the Chh., Upa., p. 23 f.; EHVS, p. 30.

²According to B.B. Majumdar (Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend, Calcutta, 1969, p. 2 ff.) the Chhāndogya does not describe Kṛshṇa as a pupil of Ghora Āngirasa; it is Śankarāchārya who in his commentary on this Upa. makes this statement. If true, the contention of Majumdar would remove the difficulty created by the differences in the names of Krshna's guru as given in the Paurānika tradition and the Chhandogya. But even if the Chhandogya does not mention the discipleship of Krshna explictly, its assumption that after hearing what Ghora had said 'Krshna lost all thirst for knowledge' suggests that Krshna was the disciple and Ghora the guru. Probably it was what prompted Sankara to attribute teacher-taught relationship to them.

Max Müller, SBE, 1, 52, n. 1; Macdonell and Keith, Vedic Index; De, S.K., IHQ, XVIII, pp. 293-301; Pusalker, A.D., Studies in the Epics and the Purānas, p. 57 f., Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 70 f.

Barth, op. cit.; Raychaudhuri, EHVS, p. 48 ff.; S.K. Bhartacharya, Krshna Cult, New Delhi, 1978, p. 5.

Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 71.

epic Kṛshṇa is the son of Devakī; the Kṛshṇa of the Upanishad is also called the son of Devakī. The Kṛshṇa of the Gītā is often styled as Achyuta; the same epithet figures in the Upanishad about the pupil of Ghora. The teacher of the Upanishadic Kṛshṇa belonged to a family (Āṅgirasa) closely associated with the Bhojas, who were also the kindred of the epic Kṛshṇa. In the Karṇaparvan Āṅgirasī śruti is praised by Kṛshṇa as the best of all the revealed texts.

The doctrines which Kṛshṇa Devakīputra is said to have learnt from Ghora Angirasa reappear in the Gītā: (a) Ghora Angirasa deprecates vidhiyajña while the Gītā makes little of dravyamāna yajña. Ghora taught Kṛshṇa that the life of man in its various states till his death may be compared to the various ceremonies observed in ritual sacrifices; the mystic meaning of sacrifice is the life of Man himself (Purushayajñavidyā). With this we may compare Gītā IX. 2: "Arjuna! whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer as oblation to the sacred fire, whatever you bestow as gift, whatever you do by way of penance, offer it all to Me". (b) Ghora taught Krshna that the practice of certain virtues, austerity, liberality, uprightness, harmlessness and truthfulness is as effective as the offering of the customary gifts to the priests: 'Atha yattapo dānamārjjavamahimsā satyavachanamita tā asya dakshināh (Chh. Upa. III. 17.4). These virtues occur in Gītā XVI. 1-2 where they find a place in the list of qualities attributed to the man of Godlike character (Dānam damaścha satyāmakrodhah). vajñaścha svādhyāyastapaārjjavam ahīmsā Especially ahimsā, a word which does not occur again in the principal Upanishads, became a special virtue of the Vaishnava sect. (c) Ghora also taught Krshna that at the hour of death a man should think, "Thou art the Imperishable, the Never-falling, and the very Essence of life". This lesson of the importance of the last thought is taught in Gītā VIII. 5-6 which declares that the remembrance of Kṛshṇa at the time of death leads one to Him. (d) The Santiparvan of the Mbh. states that the Satvatavidhi expounded by the epic Krshna had been declared in the days of yore by the sun himself. In the Gitā Krshna also states that the Yoga taught by Him was originally enunciated by the sun. these facts prove that the parallelism between the teaching of It is true that Ghora and those of the $G\bar{\imath}\iota\bar{a}$ is not only superficial.

none of the cardinal principles of Bhāgavatism as enunciated in the Gītā are referred to by Ghora, but it is nobody's case that Bhāgavatism existed in a developed form in the age of the Chhāndogya. The evidence of the Chhāndogya only proves that Kṛshṇa Devakīputra was a historical figure who learnt many of the doctrines found in the Gītā (composed several centuries later) from Ghora Āṅgirasa.

Date of Kṛshṇa of the Epic and Chhāndogya

The human Kṛshṇa of the Chhāndogya, who was a religious thinker, was thus identical with the Krshna of the Gītā and the Mbh. the friend of the Pandavas. The Chhandogya does not refer to the Pāṇḍavas because there is no occasion in the text to mention them. But there is no inherent improbability in the supposition that the epic Kṛshṇa was, in his early years, taught by Ghora Āngirasa. The similarities in the ideas of the Chhāndogya and the Gītā prove Further, the date of the two is the same. The Chhāndogya may easily be placed in the 9th century and the Mahābhārata was fought about the same time. Further, the Jaina tradition makes Kṛshṇa a contemporary of Arishṭanemi or Neminātha, the 22nd Tirthankara who was the immediate predecessor of Parśvanatha, the 23rd Tīrathankara.2 As Pārśvanātha flourished in the 8th century B.C. Kṛshṇa, the contemporary of Arishṭanemi, the immediate predecessor of Pārśva, must have flourished in the ninth century B.C. The Paurāņika genealogies of the post-Bhārata War kings also brings us to the same date, as Pargiter has shown.

Evolution of the Kṛshṇa Saga: the Super-imposition of Vedic Legends

But the life of Kṛshṇa, which must have been somewhat complex even in its original form, became far more complex and assumed legendary dimensions when he was deified and identified with Vishṇu-Nārāyaṇa and Divine Vāsudeva (infra). One of the results of this process was the transmutation of some Vedic legends in

¹For the date of the Bhārata War vide, Goyal, 'Mahābhārata aura Dāśarājña kī Tithiyān,' Purākalpa, I, iv, 1973, pp. 5-18.

⁸Cf. Jacobi, Jaina Sūtras, I, pp. 271-79; II, pp. 112-19; EHVS, p. 39.

which persons having the name Krshna figured and their superimposition on the Kṛshṇa saga and also the transfer of some of the elements of personality of the Vedic gods Indra and Vishnu to him. The Vedic and Buddhist texts now several seers bearing the name of Kṛshṇa, who were quite distinct from Vāsudeva of the Vrshni race. Such were Krshna the father of Viśvakāya (RV. I. 116.23; I.117.7), Kṛshṇa Āngirasa (Kaush. Br., XXX, 9), Krshna Hārīta (Ait. Āraņyaka, III. 2-6), Kānha, the mighty seer mentioned in the Ambattha Sutta. In the RV Krshna is the name of a demon who lays hidden in the river Amsumatī (Yamunā) and whom Indra slew. Here we have the nucleus of the hostility between Indra and Kṛshṇa. On the other hand, the term Govinda is used in the RV as an epithet of Indra in the sense of the finder of the cows. Another epithet of Kṛshṇa, Keśī-Nisūdana, is also applicable to Indra. Moreover Kṛshṇa is closely associated with Arjuna, regarded as the son of Indra. In the HV (II.68.33) Krshna describes himself as the younger brother of Indra. Vishnu is also known by the name Upendra. Thus the HV account of Kṛshṇa opposing the Indra cult and instructing the gopas to abandon the old ritual and to worship the mountains and cattle, is only a record of the super imposition of the new Vasudeva-Kṛshṇa cult on the old Indra worship.

Super-imposition of the Manu-Vaivasvata Legends? Identity of Heracles of Mathurā mentioned by Megasthenes with Kṛshṇa is an a priori Assumption

Almost all the Indian historians follow R.G. Bhandarkar in assuming that the Heracles who, according to Megasthenes was held in special honour by the people of Mathurā, may be identified with Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa. They have apparently done so without analysing the statement of Megasthenes critically. The identity of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa and the Heracles of Megasthenes cannot be assumed by arguing that the nature and characteristics of the Indian and Greek gods are similar—if they are similar at all. The identification of the Indian Heracles must rest upon his own characteristics.

¹Rhys Davids, Dialogues of the Buddha, I, p. 118; cf. Majumdar, B.B., Krsna in History and Legend, p. 268.

racteristics for, though he has been described in detail by Megasthenes and other Greek writers, his personality does not correspond with the personality of his Greek counterpart. In other words for the identification of the Indian Heracles we will have to seek parallels to his characteristics in the features of Indian gods and heroes themselves. But here the difficulty is-and it has not been appreciated by any scholar so far-that the Greek writer has used only two names for the Indian gods and heroes-Dionysos whom he calls the god of the hill people and Heracles whom he describes as the god of plains or cities.2 The possibility, therefore emerges that in Heracles Megasthenes has described several Indian gods and heroes.3 In other words, it is possible that the personality of the Indian Heracles is a composite one.

Indian Heracles in Classical Writers

The first god, who appears to have contributed to the composite personality of the Indian Heracles, is Siva. This strain manifests itself best when the Greek authors describe his association with the Sibae or the Sibi people. It is said that like Heracles they wore skins, carried clubs and branded on the back of their oxen the representation of a club wherein the Greeks recognised a memorial of the club of Heracles.4 These features, as Cunningham⁵ believed, tend to suggest the identity of the Indian Heracles with Siva.

That by Heracles Kṛshṇa may also be meant is suggested, but only slightly by an observation of Quintus Curtius (1st cent. B.C.). On the authority of the historians of Alexander he informs us that the soldiers of Porus, who regarded it a dishonour more undesirable than death to flee from the battle-field, carried the image of Heracles in front of their ranks, for they believed that it would

¹Cf. Dahlquist, Allan, Megasthenes and Indian Religion (MIR), Uppasala, 1962, p. 33 f.

²Majumdar, Classical Accounts of India, p. 273.

⁸He has apparently done so in the case of Dionysos. Cf. Ch. on Saivism.

⁴Majumdar, op. cit., p. 219.

⁵Cunningham, A., Coins of Ancient India, pp. vii-viii. Siva wears animal skin and in his Lakulīśa incarnation at least, carries a club. On the Kushāņa coins also he is shown as carrying a club. The tribal name Sibi also suggests this identification.

enthuse them for victory.1 As Porus was himself a descendant of the Pāndavas and as Krshna is said to have taught Arjuna to fight in the Bharata War with zeal, J.N. Banerjea is inclined to identify the Heracles described by Curtius with Krshna.2 He is most probably right.

But what about the description of Heracles in connection with Mathura, which is regarded as the main basis for the prevalence of the worship of Vāsudeva-Kṛshņa in the Mathurā region in c. 300 B.C.? Before we discuss this question let us see what Megasthenes himself has to say about it. He has been quoted extensively by Arrian who explicitly states that he took his material for this passage from Megasthenes whom he mentions three times by name.3 Diodorus also uses this material but briefly, and without naming his source.4 However, he adds a few minor points and helps us in understanding the intention of Arrian better. Other classical writers do not add anything new.

Shorn of the unnecessary details and miraculous elements, the following is the summary of the Heracles legend, as given with reference to Mathura:

According to Megasthenes, as quoted by Arrain, Heracles who 'was held in special honour' by the Sourasenoi of Mathura, came to India 'as a stranger' but according to another tradition was 'in reality a native of India'. He flourished 138 generations before Sandracottos (Chandragupta Maurya). He had a daughter named Pandaia, who was boin to him late in life. He had 'incestuous intercourse with the girl in order that a race of kings sprung from their common blood might be left to rule over India'. He had 'a very numerous progeny of male children' born to him. Diodorus makes this point more explicit. He says that the sons having reached man's estate' Heracles 'divided all India into equal portions for his children whom he made kings in different parts of his dominions. He provided similarly for his only daughter whom he reared up and made a queen'. Arrian adds the additional information that Heracles entrusted his daughter with the sovereignty

¹Majumdar, op. cit., pp. 119-20.

Banerjea, Purănic and Tantric Religion, p. 25.

^aMajumdar, op. cit., pp. 221-23.

⁴ Ibid., p. 236.

of the region which was called after her name, Pandaia. 'When he was ridding land and sea of whatever evil monsters infested them, he found the sea-pearl. Appreciating its beauty as a wearing ornament, Heracles, it is said, caused it to be brought from all the seas into India, that he might adorn with it the person of his daughter'.

Vaivasvata Manu in the Vedic and Paurānika Literature

The legend of the Indian Heracles as detailed above at once reminds one of Manu, the ancestor of all the Vedic Kshatriya dynasties. This Heracles has nothing in common with Vasudeva-Krshna, and for that matter with Siva or Indra. The notion popular with a section of scholars that Megasthenes has described Heracles as the incarnation of Vishņu¹ is absolutely baseless. On the other hand the similarities between Manu Vaivasvata and the Indian Heracles are too numerous and significant to be ignored. In the Vedic literature, which obviously must have been one of the main sources, of knowledge for the informants of Megasthenes about contemporary Indian religions, is found the legend of Manu which evolved gradually. In the RV Manu appears as 'the first man', the son of Vivasvant, the first of sacrificers and establisher of sacrifice.2 In the Satapatha he is called the Ruler of Man while Yama, another son of Vivasvant, is described as the Ruler of the Dead.3 Of his legends, the most important is that of the Deluge, described in the Satapatha, of which he is warned by a fish and which he escapes with the agency of the fish. Thereafter, and from the point of view of our problem it is a very significant fact, he had incestuous relations with his daughter Ida and

¹Lassen (quoted in MIR, p. 9 f.) was the first to suggest it. It won acceptance among a section of scholars. Cf. The Cambridge History of India, I, Cambridge, 1922, p. 167. Also see A.D. Pusalker (Studies in the Epics and Purāņas of India, Bombay, 1955, p. 65), who believes that "the Greek ambassador definitely states that Kishna was regarded as an incarnation of Vishnu''.

²Keith, A.B., The Religion, and Philosophy of the Vedas and Upanishads, I, Cambridge, Mass, 1925, p. 228 f.

^{*}ŚB, XIII. 4.3.3-4.

produced the human race.¹ In the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa² and the Taittirīya Samhitā³ he is connected with the law of property; he divided his property among his sons and enabled one of them, Nābhānedishṭha, who was deprived of his share by his brothers, to get his patrimonial heritage.

The Pauranika legends regarding Manu Vaivasvata are apparently the amplified versions of the Vedic legends. It is true that in their present form the Puranas were edited in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods but, as shown by A.S. Altekar and many others,4 in their original form these works existed in the later Vedic and post-Vedic periods also. Hence it may reasonably be surmised that in some form or other the Manu legend of the Puranas was known to the Indians of the age of Megasthenes. Now, what do the Puranas tell us about Manu? Firstly, he is described as the son of Vivasvant and the first post-Diluvian ruler of India though the story of the Deluge is found in a greatly amplified form and the fish of the Satapatha has become the fish incarnation of Vishnu. Secondly, all the Vedic Kshatriya dynasties are said to have sprung from him. He is described as the father of nine valiant sons, Nabhanedishtha of the Brahmanas being one of them. Thirdly, apart from these nine sons he is described as the father of a tenth son also who had a dual personality—as male Ila and female Ila. It appears that the moral outlook of the post-Vedic Indians compelled them to give this twist to the Vedic legend of Manu's incestuous relations with Ida. However, it is significant that Ila or Ida continues in the Puranas to be the

¹SB, I, 8.1.1-10. "She came to Manu. 9. Manu said to her, 'Who art thou'? 'The daughter', she replied.....10. With her he lived worshipping and toiling in arduous religious rites, desirous of offspring. With her he begot this offspring which is this offspring of Manu' (Original Sanskrit Texts, I, reprinted, Delhi, 1972, p. 184).

²Aitareya Brāhmaņa, V. 14 (OST, I, p. 191 f.).

^aTaittiriya Samhitā, III.1.9.4 (Manuh putrebhyo dāyam vyabhajat; OST, 1, p. 193).

⁴Altekar, A.S., Presidential Address (Ancient India Section), Indian History Congress, 1939; A.D. Pusalker in *The Vedic Age*, Bombay, 1965, p. 271 f.

^bFor a collated account of Manu Vaivasvata vide Pargiter, F.E., Ancient Indian Historical Tradition, reprinted, Delhi, 1962, p. 84 f. and pp. 253-55; Pusalker A.D., The Vedic Age, p. 176 f.; Siddhesvara Sastri, Chitrava, Bhāratavarshīya Prāchīna Charitra Kośa, pp. 611-13.

eldest child of Manu. Fourthly, the Paurānika Manu, like his Vedic counterpart, divided his whole realm amongst his sons including Ila/Ila. The association of Manu, if not of Ila, with the South (where the Pandya kingdom of Megasthenes was situated) is mentioned in the Bhagavata P. where, in the Deluge legend, he is described as the Lord of the Dravida Country (Dravidesvarah).1 And lastly, and it is also a very significant point, Manu is supposed to have flourished 135 generations before Chandragupta Maurya, for according to the genealogical tables of the Paurāņika dynasties prepared by Pargiter,2 from Manu to the fall of the Nanda dynasty 135 generations of kings had ruled over the various parts of the country (95 generations of the pre-Bhārata War period +5 generations from Yudhishthira to Adhisīmakṛshṇa +26 generations between Adhisīmakṛshṇa and Mahāpadma Nanda +9 kings of the Nanda dynasty); Chandragupta Maurya himself belonged to the 136th generation.

Indian Heracles of Mathurā Appropriated the Legends of Manu Vaivasvata

Thus we find that almost all the main points about Heracles (as described in connection with Mathura) and Manu Vaivasvata are similar. Both of them flourished at about the same time (roughly more than 135 generations earlier than Chandragupta Maurya). Manu Vaivasvata, like Heracles, had many sons and divided his kingdom among them. Like Heracles also, he is said to have had incestuous relations with his daughter whom he gave a part of his dominion. From Megasthenes it appears that in his days it was also believed that Heracles had been the ruler of a southern country which came to be known as Pandya after the name of his daughter Pandaia who was made its queen by Heracles. The memory of the association of Manu Vaivasvata with this region is preserved in the Bhagavata P, wherein he has been described as the Lord of the Dravida country. It appears that by the time Magasthenes visited India some legends about the Pandya country had got currency. In this connection it is worth noting that Megasthenes himself heard of the famous pearls of this country-of course in

¹Bhāgavata P., VII. 24.13.

²Pargiter, F.E., op. cit., pp. 144-48 and pp. 179-83.

the form of a legend—which were in the later ages so graphically described by Khāravela,¹ Kālidāsa,² Macro Polo,³ etc. It is also interesting that the Pāṇḍyas had their capital at Mathurā (Madurai) and it existed at least as early as the date of the Ghaṭa Jātaka, for its author refers to the Mathurā of northern India as Upper Mathurā⁴ which by implication suggests the existence of Southern Mathurā. Further, the name Pāṇḍya is derived by Kātyāyana in a Vārttika⁵ from Pāṇḍu who was himself an Aila, that is a descendent of Iḷā. These facts indicate the process by which the legend of Pandaia might have evolved.

Here a few objections against the proposed identification of the main features of Heracles with Vajvasvata Manu may be anticipated and answered. Firstly, it may be pointed out that nowhere in Indian literature the worship of Manu as a god occurs; he is described only as a human ancestor. That is so. But we submit that Megasthenes has also mentioned Heracles only as a human ancestor; while describing him in association with Mathura, he nowhere refers to his 'worship as a god'. All he says is that Heracles was 'held in special honour' by the Sourasenoi. Secondly, objection may be raised that the name of the town Kleisobora, which may be the Greek form of the name Kṛshsṇapura,6 suggests that in the age of Megasthenes Kishna was already popular in the Mathura region. But it is not our contention that Krshna worship was not known in Mathura in the fourth century B.C. in this area. What we are suggesting is that Heracles of Mathura, who was 'held in special honour' by the Sourasenoi, had appropriated the legends of Manu Vaivasvata. Logically these two are quite different propositions. Here it may also be pointed out that Diodorus describes Heracles as the founder of a number of cities, the most renowned and the greatest of which was Palibothra (Pātaliputra). It was 'fortified with trenches of notable dimension which were filled with water introduced from the river'. He also

¹Cf. Khāravela's Hathigumpha inscription (Pamadarājā...mutā-mani ratanāni āharāpayati), Goyal, Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 364.

²Raghuvamśa, VI, 50.

³Cf. Lal, K.S., History of the Khaljis, Allahabad, 1950, p. 186 f.

^{*}Cowell's trans., IV, p. 55 f.; cf.; Sircar, Religious Life in Ancient and Medieval India, p. 18.

⁵On Pāṇini, IV. I. 168.

⁶Some doubt this identification (cf. MIR, pp. 131-33).

built a costly palace there. But apparently this legend has nothing to do with either Manu or Kṛshṇa. It appears that the foundation of Pāṭaliputra, which came into existence as late as fifth century B.C., was wrongly attributed to Heracles either by Megasthenes himself or by his informants. To Manu, the first king of the country, such an achievement was easily attributable.

Super-imposition of Legends which Grew out of the Victory of Bhāgavatism over Other Cults

Many episodes of the Kṛshṇa saga represent mythical accounts of the subjugation of some of the lower cults by Bhagavatism when it was gradually accepted as authoritative by the orthodox people. Vegetation worship, beast worship, serpent worship, the dark and fearful cults of ghost-and-demon worship, all bowed to the new god and contributed some legends to his evolving personality. The dragging of the mortar by child Krshna, which uprooted the two arjuna trees, obviously refers to the supplanting of some local tree-worship by the Vasudeva cult. The HV expressly states that these trees were being worshipped as gods for granting objects of The quarrel of Krshna, with his maternal uncle Kamsa may have a historical foundation, for it is mentioned in the Ghata Jātaka, and the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali; but in the age of Patanjali both Kamsa and Krshna were regarded as deities also. According to a Mahābhāshya passage in dramatic performances the granthikas divided themselves into two groups: those representing the followers of Kamsa had their faces blackened and those of Krshna had their faces painted red.2 The account of the killing of Pūtanā by Kṛshṇa, of Bāṇa's war with Kṛshṇa and of Kārttikeya with Pradyumna are other such instances. Pūtanā appears to have been a mother-goddess of dreadful nature who afflicted children. She appears among the attendant mothers of Skanda in the Śalyaparvan of the Mbh. and is identified with Āryā in the Āryastava of the HV. Her worship clashed with that of Krshna, in which the latter emerged victorious.

At one time Arjuna was also deified and worshipped. The Ashlādhyāyī of Pāṇini refers to the worship of Arjuna alongwith

¹Majumdar, op. cit., p. 236.

²EHVS, p. 29.

that of Vāsudeva (Vāsudev-Ārjunābhyām vuñ). Kātyāyana lays down that in a dvadva compound of two words the one denoting a more honoured entity will precede the other denoting the less honoured. The Mbh. preserves the tradition about the worshippers of Arjuna and states that Vāsudeva and Arjuna were really the ancient gods known by the names of Nārāyaṇa and Nara (V.49.19). However, the origin of Arjuna worship is shrouded in mystery. The RV (VI.9.1) refers to the 'dark' (kṛshṇa) day and 'the bright or white' (arjuna) day, but this apparently has no connection with the epic Kṛshṇa and Arjuna. In a Jātaka Arjuna is mentioned as the eldest of the five sons of Pāṇdu. The Mbh. mentions Arjuna as the son of Indra while the Śatapatha informs that Arjuna is a secret (guhya) name of Indra. Later, the Arjuna worshippers were obviously merged among the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa.

The Purāṇas refer to the shifting of Kṛshṇa and his cowherds from Gokula to the forests of Vṛndā; and some later Purāṇas relate the seduction of Tulasī-Vṛndā, wife of the demon Jalandhara (or of nāga Śaṅkhachūḍa in some accounts) by Vishṇu. She is also an example of the worship of the mother-goddess of a grove coming to term with Bhāgavatism.

The story of a false Vāsudeva, Pauṇḍraka Vāsudeva, mentioned in several Purāṇas and the Mbh., may be explained only by the supposition that he was a rival of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa and claimed to be the embodiment of Divine Vāsudeva. It shows that Kṛshṇa's divinity was not easily accepted; his worshippers had to make sternous efforts to establish it. In the Sabhāparvan of the Mbh. Śiśupāla makes fun of Kṛshṇa and of his 'so-called' valorous deeds.

Kṛshṇa as Gopāla

The idea of the Gopāla (pastoral) Kṛshṇa and some of the Pāurāṇika stories about his childhood were evidently borrowed from the Vishṇu legends of the Vedic literature. Thus he is Gopa (Vishṇu is so called in RV, I.22.28) and Śipivishṭa (Vishṇu in RV

¹Cf. Supra, p. 96 and n. 3.

²Gonda, AEV, p. 159.

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VII. 99.5-6) and Govinda and Damodara (Vishnu in the Baudhāyana DS, II.5.24). However despite the fact that the idea of a pastoral Kṛshṇa was borrowed from the Vedas, its development was largely the result of his identification and amalgamation with the worship of some youthful god of the Abhira tribe. As noted above, in the Vishnu P. Krshna tells his tribesmen that as they possess neither fields nor houses and wander about with their wagons and cattle, they should worship cows and mountains, not Indra. R.G. Bhandarkar suggests that the foster parents of Kṛshṇa belonged to the foreign nomadic Abhīra tribe which came to India in the early centuries of the Christian era, and brought with it the Christian legends of a pastoral god whose identification with Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa led to the engrafting of Christian myths on the latter. The theory of the Christian origin of these stories has been rightly questioned (infra), but the connection of the Abhīras with the worship of Kṛshṇa as a youthful boy-god of herdsmen seems to be indisputable. In the Padma P. Vishnu is made to say that he would be born amongst the Abhiras in his eighth incarnation. The HV and the Balacharita of Bhasa inform that Kṛshṇa was brought up in a ghosha, and in the Amarakośa, Abhīrapalli is a synonym for ghosha. The work further enumerates Ābhīra as a synonym for gopa. Whether or not the Ābhīras were a foreign tribe as, following R.G. Bhandarkar, some scholars including D.R. Bhandarkar, D.C. Sircar etc. believe, is a controversial question. Mirashi and others think that the Abhiras were an aboriginal people living in the Punjab before the Aryans came in India. According to J.N. Banerjea however a Deoghar relief which depicts Nanda and Yaśoda, the foster-parents of Kṛshṇa, are shown wearing characteristically foreign garments.1

¹B.B. Majumdar (op. cit., p. 269 ff.) points out that the Ābhīras existed in India in the second century B.C. because Patañjali refers to them. Further, the gopas are described as Vaiśyas and comely in appearance while the Ābhīras were ugradaršana. The Ābhīras are also not known to have settled in the Mathurā region in that period. Kosambi describes Kṛshṇa as a dark hero of the non-Aryan Yādava tribe (JBBRAS, NS, XXVII, p. 43). But the Yādavas are described as an Aryan race, the descendents of Yadu. On the basis of the epithet Keśī Buddha Prakash ('Kṛṣṇa, an Anthropological Study', P.K. Gode Commemoration Volume, II, pp. 36-57) believes that Kṛshṇa represented Caspian ethnic group. But Kṛshṇa was a Keśīnisūdana, and not Keśī.

Kṛshṇa as Gopivallabha

The identification of Kṛshṇa with the Abhīra divinity appears to have been largely responsible for the introduction of such erotic elements in the Krshua saga as his amorous dalliances with the gopis. But the story of his relations with the gopis is found only in the HV and the Puranas, and is not met with in the Jatakas or in any other early text. Its mention in the Mbh. is a matter of dispute. The HV and the Vishnu P. narrate Kṛshṇa's sports with gopis who are described as ratipriyā (fond of pleasures). The Bhāgvata P. further elaborates these stories. According to the Vishnu P. Kṛshṇa enacted the rāsa in the company of the cowherdmaidens, and the HV and the Balacharita of Bhasa refer to the performance of hallīsā or hallīsaka dance by Kṛshṇa and the gopīs.2 The Gāthāsaptaśati of Hāla contains several gāthās referring to the stories of Kṛshṇa and gopīs but their date is uncertain. Some Tamil poems of the Sangam Age also refer to a pastoral god and his amusements in the cow-settlements. These poems probably formed a genuine part of the earliest Tamil literature, which was The Silappadikāram also composed between 100-300 A.D. mentions that Mayavan (Kṛshṇa) and his wife Nappināi were worshipped by the cowherds and the milk-maids. Evidently the legends of Gopāla Kṛshṇa were popular among the people of South India also.

Teachings of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa: Gītā as the Primary Work of Bhāgavatism

The two earliest sources for Bhāgavata dharma, which at some stage of its evolution was identified with the Pāncharātra and came to be known also as Sātvata, Ekāntika or Nārāyanīya

¹Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 467. According to J.N. Banerjea and many others the verses referring to Kṛshṇ's life at Vṛndāvana uttered by Siśupāla are all interpolations. But these verses are found in all the MSS of the Mbh. and are accepted as genuine in the critical ed. (Majumdar, B.B. Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend, Calcutta, 1969, p. 235). There are other indications also that some of the authors of the Epic knew Kṛshṇa's associations with gopālas. When Subhadrā was first sent to her mother-in-law's house, she was dressed as a gopālikā that is gopī (ibid., p. 237). Draupadī also invoked Kṛshṇa as Gopījana vallabha.

²Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Rāsalīlā kā Aitihāsika Vikāsa' Parishad Patrikā, July 1965, pp. 60-67.

dharma are the Gītā and the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. (Śāntiparvan, 333-51). Of these two, the Gītā is obviously older (supra, p. 100) because (a) the doctrine of the four Vyūhas mentioned in the Nārāyaṇīya is unknown to the Gītā; (b) the Nārāyaṇīya knows the Gītā "taught by the Lord himself (Bhagavatā svayam) when Arjuna became despondent in face of the drawn out armies of the Kauravas and Pāṇḍavas" and (c) there is far greater emphasis on bhakti in the Gītā than in the Nārāyaṇīya which may be regarded as a proof of the comparative greater antiquity of the former.

As a whole the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ is far less sectarian in nature than the Nārāyaṇīya. This fact, coupled with the universality and syncretic nature of its doctrines and absence of any specific reference to the Bhagavata or Satvata dharma in the Gītā itself, has led many a scholars to deny its importance as a text of Bhagavatism. the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$ IV.1-2 mentions exactly the same tradition as does the Nārāyanīya (Mbh. XII.348.51-52) about the origin of its teachings viz. that this immortal yoga was taught by the Lord to Vivasvān (Sun god) who conveyed it to Manu and who in turn imparted it to Ikshvāku—proving thereby that if the latter is a Bhagavata text, which it certainly is, the former also expounds the same religion.2 The same is further confirmed when Vaisampāyana, while speaking of the origin of the Bhagavata dharma directly from Narayana, tells Janamejaya: "It is this religion. O king, that has already been taught to you in the Harigītā (evidently another name of the Bhagavadgītā)"3 The very name Bhagavadgītā may also be taken as the proof of the supposition that it embodies the doctrine of the Bhāgavata or Nārāyaṇīya dharma. Further, all the five aspects of the Lord mentioned in the Pancharatra texts excepts one—the Vyūha—are touched in the $G\bar{\imath}t\bar{a}$, some in greater and the others in lesser detail. These four aspects are para, vibhava, antaryāmin and archā. The para or the highest aspect of the Lord is explained on many occasions and in various ways. He is the same as the Upanishadic Brahman, Atman and Paramatman; He is also the

¹Mbh., XII. 348.8.

²Tilak, B.G., Gītā Rahasya, pp. 669-70.

⁸Mbh., XII. 346.11.

Purusha, nay the Purushottama. The vibhava or avatāra aspect is described in the fourth chapter where it is enunciated that when-so-ever dharma declines and adharma rises. He creates Himself for saving the virtuous and for destroying the wrong-doers. It happens age after age (IV 5-8; vide supra, Ch. 3). The antaryāmin (inner controller) aspect of the Lord is best expressed in the last Chapter of the $Git\bar{a}$ where it is averred that "the Lord dwells in the heart of all beings ($hrdese\ t\bar{i}shthati$), and by His elusive power spins them roond (as if) set on machines" (XVIII. 61). As regards the last or archā aspect, we may find it implicit in IX.26: "If any earnest soul makes offering to Me, with devotion, of leaf or flower or fruit or water that offering of devotion I enjoy." This mode of worship ($piij\bar{a}$) of (the image) of the Lord is in clear contrast to the offering of oblation to the Vedic gods through the medium of sacrificial fire.

The true nature of the teaching of the Gītā may be understood only if we appreciate its tenets of bhakti (devotion) (cf. supra p. 100ff.) and nishkāma karman desireless action).² A stress on theism and divine grace is also found in the Śvetāśvatara which is certainly older that the Gītā, but besides being Saivite in character, the Śvetāśvatara neglects the tenet of nishkāma karman. The Gītā begins with a reference to Kurukshetra as Dharmakshetra implying thereby that in order to defend dharma even wars may justifiably be waged. While exhorting Arjuna to fight, Kṛshṇa repeatedly calls it a dharmayuddha. The Bhagavata dharma of the Gītā was thus activistic. The Nārāyaņīya also declares: Activitism is the characterstic of the Nārāyaṇīya dharma (pravṛtti-lakshaṇaśchaiva dharmo Nārāyaṇātmakaḥ).3 In the Gītā activism is interpreted as discharge of duties with utter disregard to consequence and with complete surrender of the fruits of action to God. Arjuna must not care for the apparent consequences of the war. He should do his duty dispassionately without the least desire for the fruits of his

¹Banerjea, op. cit., p. 34; Bhattacharya, H., 'Critical Observations on the Concept of God in the Bhagavadgītā', Indian Philosophy and Culture, Viindavana, X, 1965, p. 40 ff. Maheshwari, H., 'Spiritual Values in the Gītā', ibid., p. 11-17 ff.

²Dandekar, R.N., 'Hinduism and Bhagavadgītā', Journal of the Oriental Institute, Baroda, XII, No. 3, 1963, pp. 232-37.

³Cf. Radhakrishnan, S., Indian Philosophy, I, p. 491, n. 1.

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actions, 'for it is only in (rightful) actions that he has the claim, but he has never any such (right) to their fruits (karmanyevādhi-kāraste mā phaleshu kadāchana).' Thus the teaching of desireless action is given a pronounced theistic tinge. In other words the Bhāgavata religion, specially of the Gītā, embodied a philosophy of action based on devotion (cf. supra, p. 101).

Kṛshṇa not only expatiate on the nature of the true knowledge (jñāna) but also explains the true character of Yoga which is higher perspective of action and comes through detachment (Yogaḥ karmasu kauśalam). A Yogin curbs his passions and maintains calmness both in joys and sorrows He is a sthitaprajña who is unmoved by honour and dishonour. He attains the highest stage of Brahman (Brāhmisthiti) where he is never bewildered and from which he never falls down.

In the Chapter entitled Karmasannyāsayoga, and elsewhere, many scholars find Lord's unequivocal support for the doctrine of the unity of jñāna and karman (jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda). though a few others including Sankarāchārya do not agree with this view. But that the Lord lays great stress on the attainment of true knowledge also, is fully proved when he describes four categories of virtuous people who resort to him. They are: (1) arta - those who come to him in distress; (2) jijñāsu—those who approach him in a spirit of enquiry; (3) artharthi—those who seek emoluments (artha); and lastly (4) jñānī-those who are (really) wise. Of these the last, the possessors of true knowledge, who are ever united to Him and who have one-souled devotion to him. are said to be the best.3 Thus the Gitā does not seek to combine karman and jñāna in the manner in which the advocates of jñānakarmasamuchchayavāda sought. For the Gītā karman and jñāna are not external to each other; their unity may be seen in God

¹Joshi, K.S., 'On the Meaning of Yoga', *Philosophy*: East and West, XV, No. 1, 1965, pp. 53-64.

²Cf. Sinha, J.N., 'Bhāgavata Religion: the Cult of Bhakti', CHI, IV, pp. 146-159.

Parthasarathy, K.E., 'The Jñānī in the Bhagavadgītā', The Aryan Path, XXXIV, No. 11, 1963, pp. 493-6; Pandeya, Ramaji, 'Gītā men Sannyāsa aura Tyāga', Prajñā, IX, No. 1, 1963, p. 276 ff.

and in his Incarnation.1

The philosophy of desireless action as advocated in the Gītā is generally supported by the other portions of the Mbh. and also by the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas. The Epic and Purāṇas are full of legends which seek to establish the doctrine of the desireless action. For example, the Vishṇu P. II. 3.25 adopts this philosophy. The Agni P. in Chapter 381 gives a summary of the Gītā in 58 verses while the Garuḍa P. summarizes it in 28 verses (I. 210-38).

The Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Mbh.

The story of the Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Santiparvan of the Mbh. (cf. supra, pp. 99-100) begins with Nārada going to Badarikāśrama to see Nara and Nārāyana, the two of the four forms-Nara, Nārāyaņa, Kṛshṇa and Hari-of Nārāyaṇa, the Eternal Lord. There he was surprised to find them both engaged in some religious rite. On being asked by him they told him that they worshipped the Original Substance. From there Nārada went to Svetadvīpa, the White Island, situated beyond Meru. Its inhabitants were organless, did not eat food and worshipped the Great Being with single-minded devotion. There the Great Being Vāsudeva manifested Himself in Viśvarūpa (cf. Gītā's Virāṭarūpa) to him and told him that only those who are exclusively devoted to Him (Ekāntins) can get His vision. In this connection the story of king Vasu Uparichara is related who worshipped God according to the Sātvatavidhi. He performed a horse-sacrifice in which no animal was killed. In it the Lord revealed Himself only to Vasu Uparichara, and nobody else. Thereupon Vasu's priest Brhaspati got angry but he was told by Ekata, Dvita and Trita, the sons of Prajāpati, that the Great God does not reveal Himself to those who are not favoured by His grace. They relate how even they could not have a vision of Him despite their austerities

¹Pande, Spiritual Vision, p. 172. For Śankara while karman is a duty for the non-liberated, it does not contribute to jñāna or moksha directly and is impossible after knowledge. For Tilak the third Chapter of the Gītā positively establishes that action ought to continue even by the wise for the sake of society (Jñānottara karman). According to Aurobindo the Gītā begins with nishkāma karman and goes beyond it into devotional self-surrender (ibid., p. 173). Cf. Nambudripad, P.M. Bhaskaran, 'Śrī Kṛṣṇa and His Teachings', Vedānta Kesarī, LI, 1964, pp. 306-8.

for thousands of years. In another incident Vasu Uparichara is said to have sided in a controversy with gods (who held that in a sacrifice at least one goat must be killed) against the 1shis who believed that no animal should at all be sacrificed; only vegetables and grain should be offered in accordance with the teachings of the Aranyakas. Vasu's favouratism to gods led him to lying in a hole in earth for a long time. However by virtue of his exclusive devotion to Nārāyana he was saved and Garuda of Nărāyana took him to Brahmaloka.

In the end, in the account of the Bhagavata dharma of the present kalpa, the tradition of Vaivasvata Manu and Ikshvāku is related and it is said that the great dharma is professed by the Sātvatas.

From this account it is clear that the religion of the Nārāyaṇīya and the Gītā are almost identical. Like the Gītā (XI. 54) the Nārāyanīya also emphasizes singleminded devotion. Like the Gītā (XI. 48; 53) the Nārāyanī ya makes little of the cult of sacrifice and practice of austerities. Further, both these texts emphasize the worship of Vasudeva. The only difference between the two is that the Gitā gives prominence to the ideal of desireless action also; the Nārāyaņīya does not.

Bhāgavatism and Other Creeds

The theory that the Ajīvikas were a subdivision of the Bhagavatas was propounded by Kern and accepted by Bühler.1 The following arguments were advanced by them in its support : (a) The name of the first teacher of the Ajīvikas, Nanda Vachchha, means "the child of Nanda", that is Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva. (b) Commenting on a passage of the Brhajjātaka of Varāhamihira, which mentions the Ājīvikas together with the Vrddhaśrāvakas, Nirgranthas, etc., Utpala says "the use of Ajīvikas refers to those who have taken refuge with Nārāyaṇa (Nārāyaṇāśrita)". But as pointed out by D. R. Bhandarkar² Utpala does not say that the word Ajīvika means Nārāyanāśrita. He merely explains that in the text on which he is commenting the word Ajīvikas is used as an upalakshanā (a mark indicative of something that the word itself

¹Bähler, JRAS, 1911, p. 960,

IA, 1912, p. 286.

does not actually express)¹. The argument that Nanda Vachchha means Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva needs no comment.

The Jainas represent Vāsudeva as a near relation of their Arhat Arishṭanemi and include Vāsudeva and Baladeva among the sixty-three Salakāpurushas, that is great personages who, according to Jainism, have influenced the course of human history. They comprise the twenty-four Tīrthaṅkaras, twelve Chakravartins, nine Vāsudevas, nine Baladevas, and nine Prativāsudevas.² As Keith remarks Jainism is deeply permeated with Hindu influences, and especially with influences of Kṛshṇa worship.³ Its importance is seen in the fact that the legend of Mahāvīra's birth is almost entirely based on that of Kṛshṇa's birth.⁴ According to Macnicol⁵ Jainism might have drived from Bhāgavatism its democratic character and universalism while according to Raychaudhuri the doctrine of ahimsā foreshadowed in the Chhāndogya was taken up by the Jainas.⁶ The Jaina Tīrthaṅkara Ṣshabha was regarded as an avatāra of Vishṇu by some Bhāgavatas.⁷

The doctrine of ahimsā was afterwards taken up by the Buddhists as well. According to Senart, Poussin and Raychaudhuri there can be no doubt of the immense influence which Bhāgavatism exercised upon Buddhism.⁸ The story of Vāsudeva forms the subject of the Ghaṭa Jātaka. The Saddharmapuṇḍarīka and the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda contain a number of passages which remind one of the Gītā. In Saddharma XV, 7-9 the Buddha says: "Repeatedly am I born in the world of the living...I see how the creatures are afflicted.....I will reveal to them the true law". As pointed out by Raychaudhuri this is obviously an echo of the avatāravāda of the Gītā (IV. 7-8). A comparison of the styles of Buddhacharita of Aśvaghosha and of the Gītā also leaves no room for doubt that the Gītā influenced the former.⁹ The adoration of Buddha's foot-

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<sup>1</sup>Raychaudhuri, H.C., EHVS, p. 2. <sup>2</sup>Ibid. <sup>3</sup>JRAS, 1915, p. 842 f. <sup>4</sup>Apte, V.M., in AIU, p. 450. <sup>5</sup>Indian Theism, p. 63. <sup>6</sup>EHVS, p. 73. <sup>7</sup>AIU, p. 450. <sup>8</sup>Ibid
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^oCf. EHVS, p. 75 f.; Macnicol, Indian Theism, p. 65; Jayaswal, IA, 1918, p. 84.

prints was also probably borrowed from the conception of Vishpupadas.

Is Bhāgavatism a Plagiarism of Christianity?

As Bhagavatism betrays several common features with Christianity such as belief in the grace of god, efficacy of faith and devotion, value attributed to prayer, doctrine of incarnation etc.—early Western scholars, with their conviction in the theory of the White Man's Burden, found it difficult to resist the temptation of assuming that Kṛshṇa worship was nothing but a plagiarism of Christianity. Some of them, such as Pavie, even thought it humiliating for Christianity to be compared with the Krshna cult, while others like H.H. Wilson pleaded for the study of Vaishnavism and other Hindu religions if only to prove their falsity and persuade the Hindu intelligentsia to adopt the Christian faith.3 The theory that Kṛshṇa worship originated as a distorted form of Christianity and that the name of Krshna itself is only 'a corruption of the name of the Saviour' was first advanced by P. Georgi as early as 1762.4 It found a number of adherents among Western scholars, though many of them conceded that Krshna was an ancient god of India whose worship was radically transformed under the impact of Christianity.⁵ Alberecht Weber, who wrote his famous essay on 'An Investigation into the Origin of the Festival of Krsna Janmāstamī', in 1874,6 that is more than a century after Georgi, gave a new impetus to this theory. In this and many other articles he argued that the transformation of the personality of Krshna from the 'eager scholar' of the Chhāndogya Upa. and the brave hero of the early portions of the Mbh. into a deity can be explained only on the supposition of an external influence which

1Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Studies in Early Krishna Worship' in Bias in Indian Historiography, ed. by Devahuti, New Delhi, pp. 120-38.

²Quoted by Allan Dahlquist in his Megasthenes and Indian Religion, (MIR), Uppsala, 1962, p. 13.

Wilson, H.H., Essays and Lectures Chiefly on the Religion of the Hindus, II, collected and edited by Reinhold Rost, London, 1862, p. 41.

'Georgi, P., Alphabetum Tibetanum, Rome, 1762, pp. 253-65, quoted in MIR, p. 11f.

⁵Cf. the views of Sir William Jones, Polier, Kleukar, S. Bartolomaeo, etc. discussed in MIR, p. 12 and by H.C. Raychaudhuri in EHVS, p. 77.

Weber, A., IA, III, 1874, pp. 21-25, 47-52.

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in the circumstances could be no other than Christianity. He also stated his conviction that the theory of avatāra originated as an imitation of the Christian doctrine of incarnation.¹

Weber's thesis was supported mutatis mutandis by Hopkins,² Manicol,³ Grierson,⁴ Kennedy,⁵ Lorinser⁶ etc. and on some points by a few Indian scholars such as B.N. Seal⁷ and R.G. Bhandarkar⁸ also. Their arguments may be summarized thus:⁹

- (1) The worship of Kṛshṇa as the sole God is one of the latest phases of Indian religious systems, of which there is no trace in Varāhamihira.
- (2) The worship of Kṛshṇa as the sole God has no intelligible connection with his earlier position as an 'eager scholar' of the Chhāndogya and a brave hero of Mbh. This change can be explained only on the supposition of some external influence.
- (3) The legend in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. of the Svetadvīpa and the revelation which is made there to Nārada by Bhagavat Himself shows that the Indian tradition knew the fact of such an influence. According to Lassen (a) the name of the White Island and the colour of its inhabitants so different from that of the Indians, (b) the ascription to these people of the worship of an Unseen God while the Indians of the same period had images

¹Indische Studien, II, pp. 169ff.

²Hopkins, E.W., *The Religions of India*, Boston, 1895. In one of his essays he pointed out many similarities between the Gospel of John and the Gītā which he ascribed to Christian influence.

²Macnicol, Indian Theism, London, 1915, quoted in EHVS, p. 87.

⁴Grierson G.A., 'Bhakti-Mārga', ERE, 11, pp. 539a-555b; IA, 1908, pp. 251-62, 373-86. He believes that Bhakti was more recent than Christianity.

⁶Kennedy, J., JRAS, 1907, pp. 951-91; Ibid., 1908, pp. 505-21; Modern Hinduism, pp. 480 ff.

evon F. Lorinser, IA, pp. 283 ff. He suggests that the author of the $Git\bar{a}$ was acquainted with and used the Gospels.

⁷Seal, B.N., Comparative Studies in Vaisnavism and Christianity, pp. 30-53. Seal concurs with Weber in assuming that the Näräyaniya Section of the Mbh. was composed under the impact of Christianity. He finds the description of the Eucharist in Mbh. XII. 335.11. However, he is also critical of the tendency of Western scholars to regard all other religions as rudimentary in comparison with Christianity.

⁸Bhandarkar, R.G., Valsnavism, Saivism and Minor Religious Systems, reprinted in his Collected Works, IV, pp. 1-238, Poona, 1929.

°Cf. Raychaudhuri, EHVS, p. 78.

of their deities, (c) the attribution to them of faith, the efficacy of which is not an ancient Indian tenet, and (d) the value attributed to prayer, which has lesser importance in Indian rites than in Christianity, prove that the legend commemorates the actual acquaintance of some Brāhmanas with Christianity. Seal observes: "This Nārāyaṇīya record..... makes an attempt in the Indian eclectic fashion to include Christ among the Avatars or Incarnations of the Supreme Spirit Nārāyaņa, as Buddha came to be included in a later age"1

- (4) The legends of Kṛshṇa's birth, the celebration of his birthday (janmāshṭamī) and his life as a herdsman (gopāla) etc. can only be explained by the influence of Christian legends Hopkins, Bhagavatism. These similarities are, says importations, not accidental coincidences".2 According to R.G. Bhandarkar, about the first century of the Christian era the wandering Abhīras, who came to India from Syria or Asia Minor, "brought with them, probably, traditions of the birth of Christ in a stable, the massacre of the innocents, etc., and the name Christ itself. The name became recognised as Kṛshņa." "The Goanese and Bengalis often pronounce the name Kṛṣṇa as Kuṣṭo, or Kriṣto, and so the Christ of Abhīras was recognised as the Sankrit Kṛṣṇa."4 Macnicol on the other hand is inclined to believe that it were the Nestorian missions (which are believed to have entered India from the north in the year 639 A.D.) which may have brought stories of the birth of Christ which affected the story of Krshna's birth in a cow-house among cattle and the massacre of the innocents, the story that his foster-father Nanda was travelling at that time to Mathura to pay tax or tribute to Kamsa, and other details to be found in the various Puranas and in the Mbh.5
 - (5) Weber and his followers did not seek to present Kṛshṇa worship as a distorted form of Christianity; in their opinion, Kṛshṇa has only appropriated certain Christian features. Lorinser arrived at the singular conclusion that the author of the Gītā knew and used the Gospels and the Christian Fathers. He

¹Seal, op. cit., p. 30.

²Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 430.

³IA, 1912, p. 15.

Vaisnavism, Saivism etc., p. 53.

⁵EHVS, p. 87 f.

also believed that the ideas of Śraddhā and Bhakti were not originally Indian, but were taken over from Christianity and that the incarnation of Vishņu as Kṛshṇa is an imitation of the Christian dogma.\(^1\) Keith even goes to the extent of saying: "The first great theistic movement of India is that of Rāmānuja.....But precisely at this point we are met with the fact that Christian religious influences are possible and even probable"\(^2\)

The views of the supporters of the "Borrowing Theory" have been critically examined by Auguste Barth, Telang and H. C. Raychaudhuri. Even R. G. Bhandarkar, who believed that the cult of the child Kṛshṇa was at least partially influenced by Christianity, advanced cogent reasons to show that Kṛshṇa worship as a bhakti cult originated in the pre-Christian period. Their arguments may be summarized thus:

- (1) The Besnagar and Ghosundi inscriptions conclusively prove that the divinity of Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva is not a post-Christian innovation, but is at least as old as the second-first century B.C.
- (2) As pointed out by Telang, the transition from a human hero to a hero regarded as an incarnation of the Deity does not require some external influence to explain it. Similar apotheosis of Kapila, Pārśvanātha and the Buddha took place without any external influence.⁷
- (3) The highly imaginative character of the description of the White Island and its inhabitants suggests that the Śvetadvīpa legend is not to be taken literally. Firstly, the Śvetadvīpa is said to lie to the north of the Kshīrasāgara (Ocean of Milk) and to

¹IA, II, p. 283.

^{*}JRAS, 1915, p. 836 f.

⁹Barth, Auguste, *The Religions of India*, Eng. trans. by Rev. J. Wood, London, 1881.

⁴Quoted in EHVS, pp. 79, 81, 91, 95, 96.

⁵EHVS, pp. 76-97.

⁶Bhandarkar, op. cit. Though Bhandarkar held that the concept of the child-god Gopāla-Kṛshṇa was the direct outcome of the immigration into India of such foreign tribes as the Ābhīras with their belief in the personal god Jesus Christ, the shepherd, in the early centuries of the Christian era, yet he believed that Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva was already an object of worship in the pre-Christian period (op. cit., pp. 3-5, 13) and that the concept of bhakti originated from the Upanishadic concept of Upāsunā (ibid., pp. 37 ff.).

⁷EHVS, p. 79.

the north-west of Mount Meru, and above it by 32,000 yojanas (Mbh. XII. 335.8-9). As Telang points out it is obviously a legendary description, not of any actual region. Secondly, it is said that the people of the Svetadvipa did not have organs, ate nothing and entered the Sun-whatever that may mean. Thirdly, the doctrines which the Deity explained to Nārada there, cannot be shown to have any connection whatever with Christianity. As Hopkins remarks if the White Islanders are indeed to be regarded as foreigners worshipping a strange god, that god is strictly monotheistic and not trinitarian. Weber lays stress on the expression 'first-born', which he thinks refers to Christ; but the epithet is quite common in the Vedic texts and does not mean more than 'primeval deity'.2 As regard the worship of an Unseen God mentioned in the Nārāyanīya, it was familiar to the Indians from the age of the RV. Fourthly, Lassen's view that prayer is a less important element in Indian than in Christian rites, is inaccurate. As is well-known there is "no hymn to Varuna and the Adityas in which the prayer for forgiveness does not occur."

(4) As regards the possibility of the influence of the stories connected with the birth of Christ on similar legends about Kṛshṇa, it has been pointed out that (a) the festival of Ramanavamī presents many striking analogies to that of Kṛshṇa-janmāshṭamī. (b) Kennedy points out that there is no Christian representation of the suckling mother before the twelfth century while the association of Kṛshṇa with Devakī, his mother, is as old as the Chhāndogya Upa. (c) Vishnu, the Vedic deity with whom Kṛshṇa is identified in the pre-Christian Taittiriya Āraņyaka, is called in the RV Gopā which means 'protector of cows',3 or 'herdsman'.4 Further, before the Baudhāyana DS was composed Dāmodara and Govinda had become well-known deities.5 (d) As the enmity between Kamsa and Krshna is referred to as a popular legend in Patanjali's Mahābhāshya (second century B.C.), it is fair to conclude that the legend of the attempt of Kamsa to kill Krshna in his childhood

¹Ibid., p. 82.

^{*}Ibid.

³Macdonell and Keith, The Vedic Index, I, p. 238.

⁴Hopkins, op. cit., p. 5.

⁵Jayaswal, IA, 1918, p. 84.

must have also been known in that period. (e) The Harivamsa and the Puranas, in which the stories about the child Kṛshṇa referred to by Weber, Hopkins and others occur, are really not so late works as these scholars would have us believe. (f) At Mandor in Marwar are found some sculptures depicting certain exploits of the child Kishna1 which cannot be dated later than the Christian era. (g) From the Periplus of the Erythraean Sea it seems that the Ābhīras were already settled in western India ('Abiria'), in the first century A.D. They are also mentioned by Patañjali. How then could they bring with them traditions of the birth of Christ in a stable, of the massacre of the innocents, and so on?2

(5) The suggestion of Lorinser is palpably wrong. (a) As we have already shown, the Gītā existed probably as early as the fifth century B.C. Therefore, there can arise no question of its author knowing the Gospels etc. (b) The resemblances between the passages of the Gītā and of the New Testament are, in many cases, purely verbal and unreal, while many such passages of the Gītā can be paralleled from the Upanishads which are certainly pre-Christian.3 For example, when Kṛshṇa says "of creations I am the beginning and the end..... of letters I am the Syllable A" (Gītā X, 20-33), the likeness to the words in Revelation (I.8), "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, which is, and which was, and which is to come", is no doubt remarkable, but Kṛshṇa is only repeating what is found in the Upanishads, "Brahma is the A".4 Kṛshṇa's identification of Himself with everything in the universe is also in full agreement with such claims for Brahman in the Upanishads. declaration of the Gita IX.29, "They who devoutly worship Me are in Me, and I in them" and of John, VI.56, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood dwelleth in me, and I in him", are also undoubtedly similar but the Gītā is merely elaborating the Rgvedic passages which in part convey the same or a similar idea. Thus in RV II.11.12 it is said "O Indra, we sages have been in thee", and RV X.142.1 says, "This worshipper, O Agni, hath been in thee". (c) As regards śraddhā, by the time of Patañjali it had

¹EHVS, p. 91.

³Macnicol, Indian Theism, p. 276.

⁴Hopkins, The Religions of India, p. 226.

become a more important element in Indian religious life than even $medh\bar{a}$ and tapas. The $Chh\bar{a}ndogya$ Upa, is one of the oldest Upanishads, and in it we have passages where great value is ascribed to śraddhā. (d) The ideas that bhakti connotes are found even in the Vedic age (pp. 90-6). (e) The concept of the incarnation of Vishņu as Kṛṣhṇa is not a post-Christian innovation. It is clearly implied in the $T\bar{A}$ (X.1.6) which is certainly a pre-Christian work while the germs of the doctrine of avatāra or incarnation already appear in the Brāhmaṇa literature (Ch. 3, p. 81f.).

Christian Bias in Allan Dahlquist's Work

In his book Megasthenes and Indian Religion, published in 1962, Allan Dahlquist has advanced the thesis that there is no reliable evidence for the existence of Kṛshṇa bhakti in the pre-Christian period and that Magasthenes, on whom the advocates of the pre-Christian origin of Kṛshṇa-bhakti have mainly relied, does not refer to Kṛshṇa at all. As is well-known Megasthenes, who came to the court of Chandragupta Maurya as the ambassador of Seleucus in c. 300 B.C., reports that Heracles was held in special honour by the Souras enoi, an Indian tribe possessing two large cities of Methora and Kleisobora, on the river Jobares flowing through their country.2 Following R.G. Bhandarkar3 Indian scholars almost unanimously identify Heracles of the Sourasenoi with Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva, the Sourasenoi itself (evidently a derivative of the tribal name Śūrasena who lived in the Mathurā region) with the Satvatas: the two Mathurā and Kṛshṇapura cities with (probably modern Gokula) and the river Jobares with the Yamuna.4

¹The thesis of Allan Dahlquist has not been refuted so far except by the present author ('Studies in Early Kṛshṇa Worship', Bias in Indian Historiography, New Delhi, pp. 120-38. The work of Dahlquist was published in 1962. It is included in the bibliography of Suvira Jaiswal's The Origin and Development of Vaiṣṇavism (New Delhi, 1967) but is not discussed anywhere in the text. In the works of D.C. Sircar (Studies in the Religious Life of Ancient and Medieval India, Delhi, 1971) and J.N. Banerjea (Religion in Art and Archaeology, Lucknow, 1968, and Purāṇic and Tāntric Religion, Calcutta, 1966) and in other works published after 1962, it is not even mentioned anywhere.

²Majumdar, R.C., Classical Accounts of India, p. 221 f.; J.W. McCrindle, Ancient India as Described by Megasthenes and Arrian, p. 206.

Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 12 ff.

⁴Among Indian scholars only Coomaraswamy has cast doubt on the identification of Heracles with Kṛshṇa.

Dahlquist contests the identification of the Heracles of Megasthenes with Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa and suggests that in Heracles Megasthenes was describing the personality of the Vedic Indra.¹ We do not think that he has been able to give sufficient proof to make his suggestion a viable theory, but apparently he is sure of its correctness and is of the opinion that it places the problem of the relation between Christianity and Kṛshṇaism on a new footing, since 'the only witness of the Kṛshṇa cult as early as 300 before Christ is now removed'. He therefore asks: "May not Kṛishṇa, despite everything that has been said on the subject, be a result of Christian influence"?²

Criticism of Dahlquist

Whether the identification of the Heracles of Megasthenes with Indra is correct or not (supra, p. 180ff.), it cannot be denied that Dahlquist has approached the problem with a bias. He seems to be bent upon either to neglect or explain away, on extremely filmsy and sometimes ridiculous grounds, the facts which prove the prevalence of Kṛshṇa bhakti in the pre-Christian centuries. For example, while discussing the evidence of the Ashtādhyāyī of Pāṇini,3 (5th-4th cent.B.C.) he takes shelter behind the now discredited view that the famous sūtra of Pāṇini on the worship of Vāsudeva and Arjuna refers to something entirely other than Kṛshṇa bhakti,4 and dismisses the Mahābhāshya references (2nd century B.C.) to the divinity of Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva with the remark that "to judge from the works of such authors as Garbe and Bhandarkar, however, Patañjali's Mahābhāshya seems to provide no clear evidence of Kṛshṇa's divinity". 5 As regards the Gītā and the Buddhist works Niddesa and the Ghata Jataka, he does not discuss them at all presumably because the dates of their composition are not certain. However, although undecided about their exact dates most scholars believe that these works belong to the pre-Christian period6 and, therefore, point to the existence of the Krshna cult before the advent of Christ.

¹MIR, p. 88 ff.

²¹bid., p. 166.

²Paņini, Ashļādhyāyt, IV. 3.98 Vāsudevārjunābhyam vun.

⁴Cf. supra, p. 96 and n.3.

MIR, p. 166; cf. also p. 19.

^{*}AIU, p. 437; EHVS, p. 38 ff.

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Dahlquist's interpretation of the Besnagar Garuda pillar inscriptions of Heliodorus and Gautamiputra belonging to c. 100 B.C., which almost certainly prove the deification of Vasudeva-Kṛshṇa and the existence of the Bhagavata sect as pre-Christian developments, is really amusing. He suggests that Heliodorus, who came to the court of King Bhagabhadra as the envoy of the Greek king Antialkidas of Taxila and was responsible for the erection of a Garudadhvaja at Vidiśā, as well as Gautamīputra who erected another Garudadhvaja there during the reign of King Bhagavata,2 were both Buddhists.3 The facts that the deity worshipped by Heliodorus is called Devadeva Vāsudeva (a name never appropriated by the Buddha), that the Garudadhvajas were erected in his honour (a patently Vaishnava, and not Buddhist, practice), that the name Bhāgavata was used for the followers of Vāsudeva (a name never used for the Buddhists) and that a reference is made by Heliodorus to the three immortal precepts of the Bhagavata sect-dama, tyaga and apramāda (which he most likely quoted from the Gītā itself),4 have been dismissed by Dahlquist in an extremely cavalier fashion in favour of his contention that the name Gautamīputra "immediately suggests the Buddha".5 As regards the Nanaghat record of the Sātavāhana queen Nāganikā (1st cent. B.C.) which begins with an adoration to the gods Dharma, Indra, Sankarshana and Vasudeva, the Moon and the Sun, and the four Lokapalas,6 it is not mentioned by him at all though the reference to Sankarshana and Vāsudeva in a dvandva compound (Sankarshana-Vāsudeva) makes it certain that the author of this record had Vasudeva-Krshna in mind. Similarly, he does not discuss the famous Ghosundi inscription of Sarvatāta from Rajasthan (1st cent. B.C.)7 which records the erection of a pūjāśilā and prākāra at the Nārāyanavātaka for Bhagavat Sankarshana and Vāsudeva, both described as Anahita and Sarvesvara. The record conclusively proves that the worship

¹Goyal, Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 156 ff.

²Goyal, ibid., p. 158; Banerjea, Religion in Art and Archaeology, p. 10.

³MIR, p. 167.

^{*}Cf. the Gītā, XVI, 1-2; also Mbh., XII. 5.43.22; EHVS, p. 52 f.; J.N. Banerjea, Religion in Art and Archaeology, p. 8.

⁵MIR, p. 167.

Goyal, op. cit., p. 424.

⁷lbid., p. 173 ff.

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of the Vṛshṇi heroes Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa and Balarāma (Saṅkarshaṇa) was already popular in the first century B.C. and had also become associated with the worship of Nārāyaṇa by then. Allan Dahlquist has obviously overlooked all these facts.

¹Cf. Agrawala, V.S., 'Prāchīna Madhyamikā kī Nārāyaņavātikā,' Poddar Abhinandana Grantha, p. 901-2.

Chapter 8

Evolution, Growth and Spread of Vaishnavism

Evolutionary Stages of Vaishnavism

From the discussion in the preceding Chapters it is obvious that the roots of Vaishnavism may be traced to the Vedic texts themselves in the form of (a) the worship of Vishnu, not only as a member of the Vedic pantheon but probably as the object of special (though not exclusive) meditation in certain sections of the Vedic society; (b) the emergence of the Nārāyana concept; (c) the rise of the doctrines of upāsanā and devotion and (d) the rise of a solar cult taught by Ghora Āngirasa to Kṛshna Devakīputra in which, instead of the Vedic sacrifices, emphasis was given on tapas, dāna, ārjava, ahimsā, satyavachana and the doctrine that all the acts of the life of a pious man constitute a sort of sacrifice to the deity. Apart from these (e) the germs of many Vaishnava legends and of the theory of incarnation may be traced to the Vedic texts.

But as a distinct devotional sect Vaishnavism did not exist in the Vedic age. The first step in its evolution was taken when Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva was identified with Divine Vāsudeva leading to the emergence of the Vāsudeva cult or Bhāgavatism. This process was going on even when the early portions of the Mbh. were composed for, as noted above, the story of the Pauṇḍraka-Vāsudeva proves that he was another claimant for being recognised as identical with the Divine Vāsudeva.

The second step in the evolution of Vaishnavism was the identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa with the Vedic Vishṇu and Nārāyaṇa. But the question when this identification took place has not been answered satisfactorily as yet. The Mbh. contains indications that it was with great difficulty that the orthodox Brāhmaṇists recognised Kṛshṇa-Vāsudeva as Nārāyaṇa Himself. In the reviling scene

of the Sabhaparvan we find reference to people like Sisupala who openly derided the claim of Krshna to divine honours because he did not happen to be a Brāhmana. Elsewhere in the Mbh. Kṛshṇa is described as the avatara of only a fraction of the higher god. representing only a black hair of Nārāyaṇa. Later he is said to represent the one-eighth portion of the God whose another oneeighth portion comprises the whole world. In the Vishnu P. also he is an incarnate fraction of a portion of the Vedic god Vishnu. As regards the epigraphic evidence, the name of Nārāyaṇa-Vishņu is conspicuous by its absence in the Ghosundi, Besnagar, and Nanaghat inscriptions of the first century B.C. It is Vasudeva and Sankarshana and not Vishnu-Nārāyana, who usually receive the homage of the devotees. Only the name Nārāyaņavāṭaka applied to the place mentioned in the Ghosundi inscription where the $p\bar{u}j\bar{a}$ śilā in honour of Sankarshana and and Vāsudeva was placed within a prākāra indicates some connection between the worship of Nārāyaņa and the cults of Sankarshana and Vāsudeva in that period.1

Some scholars have argued that the dedication of a Garudadhvaja in honour of the god Vasudeva, recorded in the Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus² indicates his identity with Vishnu, for Garuda, also known as Suparna, the golden-winged one, is connected with Vishnu and other Sun gods.3 On the basis of a Rgvedic passage, which describes the sun as a golden-winged eagle, Banerjea states that Garuda was originally a theriomorphic form of the Sun god. Later, with the identification of Vasudeva-Krshna with Vishnu, Garuda came to be associated with Vasudeva also. On the other hand S. Jaiswal believes that garudas or suparnas were a class of lesser divinities along with the yakshas, kinnaras, vidyādharas, nāgas, etc. and their worship, like that of the yakshas and the nagas, was popular with the masses. In course of time however the garuda and the nage came to be allied with the cults of Vasudeva and Sankarshana, although their independent worship also must have continued.4

¹Goyal, S.R., Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 176 ff.

²*Ibid.*, p. 156.

^{*}EHVS, pp. 102-110.

⁴Jaiswal, S., op. cit., p. 72 f.

However in the Mbh. story of the Vaṭpatraśāyin (III. 188-89) Mārkaṇdeya explicitly tells Yudhishṭhira that Janārdana (Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa), his relative, is no other than Nārāyaṇa. The Nārāyaṇīya Section of the Śāntiparvan of the Mbh. also emphasises in a very clear manner the oneness of Nārāyaṇa with Vāsudeva. The identification of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa with Vishṇu was certainly accomplished by the time the Gītā was composed because in it Arjuna at many places addresses Kṛṣhṇa as Vishṇu. Henceforth Bhāgavatism or the Vāsudeva cult was also known as Vaishṇavism. As Vishṇu is one of the solar deities, it may be surmised (though there is no direct evidence for this) that he had, from the beginning, some connection with the religious movement associated with the name of Kṛṣhṇa who was himself a disciple of Ghora Āṅgirasa, a priest of the Sun.

In the tenth Prapāṭhaka of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka and the Mahānārāyaṇa Upa., added as a supplement to the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, the mantra prescribed for Nārāyaṇa identifies the god with Vāsudeva and Vishṇu. It reads thus: Om Nārāyaṇāya vidmahe Vāsudevāya dhīmahi tanno Vishṇuh prachodayāt (the position of Vāsudeva in the middle of the passage is to be noted). It is therefore held that the three deities were considered identical as early as the third century B.C. when this text, according to Keith, was composed. But the dates of this Prapāṭhaka of the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka and of the Mahānārāyaṇa Upa. are extremely uncertain. In his Introduction to the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, R. L. Mitra has opined that the tenth Prapāṭhaka cannot be placed earlier than the beginning of the Christian era and is in tune with the earliest of the Tantra works.

On the basis of a passage in which epithets Govinda and Dāmodara occur in the tarpaṇa (oblations of water to the manes, deities, etc.) section of the Baudhāyana D S, K.P. Jayaswal has opined that the identity of child-god Gopāla-Kṛshṇa with Vishṇu was known as early as the fourth century B.C., the generally accepted date of the work. But Raychaudhuri does not see any reference to Kṛshṇa in the passage. We feel that K. P. Jayaswal is correct when he asserts that this text identifies Vishṇu-Nārāyaṇa with Gopāla-Kṛshṇa, but we also think that this passage is a late interpolation.

The early Bhāgavata inscriptions reveal close relationship of this religion with the religion of Vedic sacrifices. The Nanaghat cave inscription of queen Nāganikā begins with an invocation to the deities Dharma, Indra, Sankarshana, Vāsudeva etc. and then goes on to record the payment of huge sacrificial fees to the priests for the performance of a number of Vedic sacrifices. The Bhāgavata king Sarvatāta mentioned in the Ghosundi record also performed an aśvamedha sacrifice. It appears that the Brāhmanas seized upon the Bhakti cults of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣhṇa and Sankarshana and infused Brāhmanical social ethics into them to re-establish their own authority.

Agencies of Syncretism Employed by Vaishnavism

The Pāncharātra-Bhāgavatism proved to be a great syncretic religion. It coalseed with several popular cults to form a great federation of religions known as Vaishnavism. The agencies employed by it to bring about this union were the following:

- (1) The theory of the Pañchavṛshṇivīras (infra) and the doctrine of Chaturvyūha (pp. 211-13) which helped Vāsudevism or Bhāgavatism to unite with itself the worship of several deities, specially Saṅkarshaṇa-Balarāma (pp. 213-16).
- (2) The doctrine of incarnation (avatāravāda) discussed in Ch. 3, which not only effected a union of the worship of Vishnu-Nārāyaṇa with Bhāgavatism (supra, Ch. 6) but also helped it to absorb a large number of deities, originally worshipped separately, within its fold (infra, p. 216ff.).
- (3) The Purusha-Prakṛti theory, by the adoption of which the cult of Śrī-Lakshmī was engrafted on it (pp. 223-30).

Concept of Panchavṛshṇivīras

Although Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa alone is regarded as the founder of Bhāgavatism, several other members of his family share the honour of deification with him. An inscription of the first century A.D. found in a well at Mora near Mathurā¹ records the setting up of the statues of the five heroes of the Vṛshṇis Bhagavatam Vṛshṇīnām Pañchavīrāṇām) in a stone temple (śaila devagrhe) built by a

¹Goyal, S.R., *Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha*, p. 204. Cf. the concept of the Five Dhyānī Buddhas who are regarded as the personifications of the five skandhas or elements.

woman named Toshā. They had a glowing and handsome appearance and were meant for worship (ārchādeśām). As pointed out by J. N. Benerjea these pañchaviras are enumerated in the Vayu P. as Sankarshana (son of Vasudeva by Rohini), Vāsudeva (son of Vasudeva by Devakī), Pradyumna (son of Vāsudeva by Rukmiņī). Sāmba (son of Vāsudeva by Jāmbavatī) and Aniruddha (son of Pradyumna), and are described as the five manushya prakṛṭi devas (gods originally human in nature). There seems to be no doubt that the worship of the Panchaviras was prevalent in the Mathura region about the beginning of the Christian era, apparently among the people of Yādava-Satvata-Vṛshṇi origin. The Vishṇudharmottara contains rules for making their images.2 The Brhatsamhitā also gives rules for making the images of Vishņu, Baladeva, Sāmba and Pradyumna, but excludes Aniruddha.3 According to Banerjea all the five Vṛshṇivīras were originally worshipped independently. It is deduced by him from certain sculptured figures and fragmentary capitals figuring Garuda, Tala and Makara, pointing to the existence of the dhvajas and shrines of Vāsudeva, Sankarshana and Pradyumna.

The Vyūha Doctrine

In the Vyūhavāda of the Pāñcharātra theoloy Para Vāsudeva is the fountain-head of the Chaturvyūha, i.e. Vāsudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa, Pradyumna and Anirudha, each succeeding Vyūha emanating from its immediate predecessor. The word vyūha (vi+uha=shoving as under) denotes that peculiar process of creation which, while bringing the product into existence, leaves the source of the product unchanged.⁴ Grierson puts the emanatory process of creation in this way: "The Bhagavat Vāsudeva in the act of creation produces from Himself, not only prakṛti, the indiscreet primeval matter of the Sāṅkhyas, but also a Vyūha or phase of conditioned spirit called Saṅkarshaṇa. From the combination of Saṅkarshaṇa and prakṛti

¹Apte, AIU, p. 448.

^{*}Ihid

³The author of the *Brhatsamhitā* was a Maga Brāhmana. He has therefore retained Sāmba in this list because Sāmba was usually identified with the Sun god.

⁴Bhatt, S.R., The Philosophy of Pāñcharātra-An Advaitic Approach, p. 49, fn. 44.

spring manas corresponding to the Sānkhya buddhi or intelligence and also a secondary phase of conditoned spirit called Pradyumna. From the association of Pradyumna with manas spring the Sānkhya Ahankāra or consciousness, also a tertiary phase of conditioned spirit known as Aniruddha. From the association of Aniruddha with ahankāra spring the Sānkhya Mahābhūtas or elements with their qualities". God in his para form is sometimes identified and sometimes distinguished from Vyūha Vāsudeva. When the two are distinguished the Vyūha Vāsudeva is said to have spring from the Para Vāsudeva. When Para Vāsudeva is not differntiated from Vyūha Vāsudeva, the number of Vyūhas, strictly speaking, is three only. Vāsudeva is the sole possessor of the six ideal guņas—jñāna, bala, vīrya, aiśvarya, śakti and tejas, while each of his three emanations possess only two of the gunas in turn.2 From the primary four emanate the twelve subsidiary Vyūhas. Keśava, Nārāyaņa and Mādhava from Vāsudeva; Govinda, Vishņu and Madhusūdana from Sankarshana; Trivikrama, Vāmana and Śrīdhara from Pradyumna and Hṛshikeśa, Padmanābha Dāmodara from Aniruddha. To this totality of 16 are added eight Vidyesvaras also evolved in an emanatory process. These are Purushottama, Janārdana, Adhokshaja, Upendra, Achyuta, Kṛshna, Nṛṣimha and Hari. The Vyūhas, Sub-vyūhas and Vidyeśvaras all taken together make up the Chaturvimsatimurtis of Vasudeva-Vishņu. In the Vyūha doctrine, Vāsudeva is invariably given the order of precedence, his elder brother Sankrshana taking the second place as Vyūha of the younger brother. The four Vyūhas including the Vyūha Vāsudeva are the same as the five Vīras excluding Sāmba. Even when the number of these four primary forms is raised to 24 the inclusion of Samba is not considered, probably because of his association with the Iranian solar cult.

Thus it is obvious that the Vyūhas were the apotheosis of the Vṛshṇi Vīras excluding Sāmba and therefore the philosophical theory which seeks to explain Vyūhas' relation with Vāsudeva should be later than the practice of the worship of the five Vṛshṇi heroes. The Vyūha doctrine must have taken a pretty long time

¹*IA*, 1908, p. 261.

²Bhatt, op. cit., p. 38 f.

to attain its full form. It was not known to the author of the Gītā.1 None of the Vyūha images so far discovered belongs to the Gupta period; most of them are assignable to the early and late medieval ages. Some scholars find the earliest reference to the Vyūha doctrine in the Brahmasūtra. But it should be noted that it is only in the later commentaries on it by Śańkara and Rāmānuja that we find clear mention of the Vyūhavāda, and not in the Brahmasutra itself.2 The two gods mentioned in the Ghosundi inscription of the first century B.C. are Viras, and not Vyūhas. In the Nanaghat cave inscription of Nāganikā also Sankarshana and Vāsudeva are probably mentioned as Vīras, and not as Vyūhas. It is probably the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali which contains the earliest allusion to the Chaturvyūha. While commenting on a sūtra of Pāṇini (VI.3.5) and explaining the form ātmachaturtha it cites Janārdanasātmachaturtha eva meaning 'Janardana with himself as the fourth'; but Baneriea does not feel that here there is a reference to the Chaturvyūha doctrine.3 The first clear enunciation of the doctrine occurs in the Nārāyanīya section of the Mbh.

It seems that all the four Vyūhas were not always recognised in the cult. The Nārāyaṇīya itself clearly says so (Mbh. XII. 349. 57). It may be that originally only two Vyūhas were recognised; the number was raised to four later on. The Vyūha doctrine in its characteristic form does not occur in the Purāṇas also though all the four Vyūhas are mentioned by them as the members of the family of Kṛshṇa; only rarely are they mentioned as the four forms of the deity. It appears that in the Gupta age the Vyūha doctrine was gradually displaced by the doctrine of incarnation. 4

Sankarshana-Balarāma (Baladeva)

Sankarshaṇa-Baladeva⁵ appears in the Mbh. as a Vṛshṇi warrior the son of Vasudeva and Rohiṇī. He is mentioned for the first time in the Arthaśāstra. It avers that his worshippers indulged

¹Raychaudhuri finds a faint trace of the evolutionary process of the Vyūhas in the Gītā VII. 4.

²See Bhatt, S.R., 'Does Bādarāyaṇa favour Pāñcharātra', Philosophical Quarterly, April, 1965.

Banerjea, op. cit., p. 40 f.

^{*}EHVS, p. 105.

⁵Jaiswal, S., op. cit., p. 51 ff.

in some kind of sacrificial drinking. Although Sankarshana appears as a Vaishnava divinity in the Mbh. and the Purānas, there are traces of his close connection with snake worship. A Mbh. passage speaks of a great serpent Baladevan. The irascible temper of Sankarshana-Baladeva, his drinking habits, his emblem of the palmyra leaf, the fact that he is regarded as an incarnation of Seshanāga, and the story that a snake came out of his mouth at the time of his death—all these support Vogel's assertion that the mythical character of Baladeva evolved out of a nāga deity which was later absorbed into Kṛṣhṇaism.

The Purāṇas and the Pāñcharātra Saṁhitās often identify Saṅkarshaṇa with Rudra-Śiva. The Brahmāṇḍa P. says that Rudra was known as Halāyudha (one who holds plough as his weapon, that is Saṅkarshaṇa) in one of his incarnations. The Vishṇu P. speaks of Saṅkarshaṇa-Rudra, who comes out of the mouth of Śeshanāga at the end of every aeon (kalpānta). It may also be pointed out that Śiva is also intimately associated with the nāgas, and Śiva and Saṅkarshaṇa both are known as mūsalin (weilder of pestle).

Another prominent feature of Sankarshana is his association with agriculture. He holds the two characteristically agricultural weapons, the pestle (an implement for cleaning rice) and the plough. His name Sankarshana itself literally means the act of ploughing or furrowing. According to Megasthenes when Dionysos came to India he taught the people of this country how to sow the land and it was he who first yoked oxen to the plough and made many Indians husbandmen and gave the people the seeds of cultivated plants. According to S. Jaiswal the description fits Sankarshana well.

Sankarshana is described as a great yogin and teacher also. The Arthaśāstra speaks of him as a deity of the ascetics with shaven head or braided hair. According to the Mbh. he expounded the Sātvata mode of worship at the end of the Dvāpara and the beginning of the Kali age. The Vishnudharmottara equates him with knowledge, specially with the Pāncharātra knowledge.

Nevertheless in the epic-Paurāņika tradition Sankarshaņa-Baladeva appears as a Vṛshṇi hero, the elder brother of Väsudeva-Kṛshṇa. As Vāsudeva Kṛshṇa was specially worshipped by Arjuna, Baladeva-Sankarshana was specially honoured by

Duryodhana. The Ghosundi inscription of the second-first century B.C. also brackets Sankarshana with Vāsudeva. Patanjali mentions Baladeva and Vāsudeva among the Vṛshṇi names and speaks of Kṛshṇa as second to Sankarshana, thereby indicating their relationship. Some other epithets of Sankarshana, such as Rauhineya (the son of Rohini), Längalin, (the wielder of the plough), and Rāma (Balarāma), are also mentioned in the Mahābhāshya. But both the epigraphic and the literary sources also suggest that in the beginning Sankarshana was in no way inferior to Vāsudeva. Ghosundi inscription gives precedence to Sankarshana Vāsudeva in the compound Sankarshana-Vāsudevābhyam describes him alongwith Vāsudeva as Bhagavat and Sarveśvara (the lord of all). The Nanaghat record of Naganika invokes the two deities in a similar fashion. According to a passage of the Mbh. Sankarshana was the incarnation of a white and Vasudeva of a black hair of the supreme god Nārāyaṇa-Vishņu. Later on, with the development of the Vyūha doctrine Sankarshana became subordinate to Vāsudeva and is invariably mentioned after him. Traditionally, Vishnu is described as resting on the serpent Sesha lying on the waters. The myth also suggests the subordination of Sankarshana to Vishnu.

The Pura pas describe Revati, the unusually tall daughter of king Raivata, as the wife of Baladeva-Balarama. In order to curb her height he bent her down with the point of his plough. A disease goddess Revatī is mentioned in the Mbh. and in the Suśruta Samhitā she is described as unusually tall, fierce and hunchbacked.

The worship of nagas appears to have been very popular in the Mathurā region, and a large number of nāga statues have been found here. This region, therefore, became the stronghold of Sankarshana worship. A stone idol of Sankarshana attributed to the second century B.C. happens to be one of his earliest extant images. Two fan-palm capitals discovered among the ruins of Besnagar and one at Pawaya in the former state of Gwalior indicate the existence of the temples of Sankarshana. The Mahābhāshya of Patañjali also speaks of the temples of Balarāma and Keśava, and a passage occurring in the Buddhist Niddesa (first century B.C.) refers to the worshippers of Baladeva.

¹Goyal, Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 173 ff.

But references to Sankarshana in the records of the post-Christian era are very few. The Nasik cave inscription probably of 149 A.D. compares Gautamīputra Sātakarni to Rāma (that is, Balarāma). He is also mentioned in the opening verse of the Svapnavāsavadattā of Bhāsa and the Śīlappadikāram, a work of the fifth-sixth century A.D., speaks of the existence of the temples of Baladeva.

Theory of Incarnation in Vaishnavism

The theory of incarnation is a fundamental Vaishnava tenet which appears to have evolved with the identification of Nārāyaņa with Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa. Thus the latter came to be looked upon as the human incarnation of the former. "The Vibhavas or the incarnatory forms of Vāsudeva-Vishņu collectively stand for the third aspect of the one god of the Pancharatrins".1 The theory of vibhavas or avatāras (incarnations) is much older than the Gītā, but it is certainly in this work that its classic exposition is found. However, its author does not specify the exact number of the avatāras; he only emphasises that the Lord incarnates himself age after age whenever occasion arises (vide p. 82f.). In the beginning the tendency was to incorporate different popular divinities such as Varāha (Boar), Narasimha (Man-Lion) and Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa simply by recognising them as manifestations of the same god. Gradually the theory became a device by which divergent rituals, cults and sects with their theories and practices were deliberately brought together and harmonized into one religion. As a result of this, the totem worshippers, the animists, the heroworshippers, all found a place in Vaishnava religion.

Of the important and specific incarnations of Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu, the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mbh. contains two lists, the first enumerating six, and the second only four avatāras. One of its ślokas listing the ten avatāras of the god is generally regarded as a late interpolation. However gradually, the number was increased. In medieval and modern works the avatāras of Vishņu are usually mentioned as ten (daśāvatāra), viz. Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha,

¹Banerjea, J.N., Paurānic and Tantric Religion, p. 45.

²Banerjea, J.N., 'The Avatāras of Visnu and Their Enumeration in Some Early Indian Texts', R.K. Mookerji Commemoration Volume, I.

Nṛṣimha or Narasimha (Man-Lion), Vāmana, Paraśurama, Rāma (son of Daśaratha), Kṛṣhṇa, Buddha and Kalkin. The Varāha and Matsya Purāṇas mention these ten in this order. The Bhāgavata P. at one place lays down that 'the avatāras are innumerable (avatārā hyasamkheyāḥ), but at other places it mentions 22 or 23 as the specific number. The Pāñcharātra texts not only write about human and animal forms of divine incarnations, but also refer to His vegetable forms. The Vishvaksena Sāmhitā mentions the crooked mango tree of the Daṇḍaka forest as an instance of this class of incarnations.

The Sātvata and the Ahirbudhnya Samhitās enumerate 39 vibhavas: (1) Padmanābha, (2) Dhruva, (3) Ananta (obviously Balarāma), (4) Śaktyātman, (5) Madhusūdana, (6) Vidyādhideva, (7) Kapila, (8) Viśvarūpa, (9) Vihangama, (10) Krodatman, (11) Badavāvaktra, (12) Dharma, (13) Vāgīśvara, (14) Ekārņavaśāyin, (15) Kamatheśvara (obviously Kūrma), (16) Varāha, (17) Narasimha, (18) Pīyūshaharaņa, (19) Śrīpati, (20) Kāntātman, (21) Rāhujit, (22) Kālanemighna, (23) Pārijātahara, (24) Lokanātha, (25) Šāntātman (obviously Buddha), (26) Dattātreya, (27) Nyagrodhaśāyin, (28) Ekaśrngatanu (Matsya), (29) Vāmanadeha, (30) Trivikrama (also Vāmana), (31) Nara, (32) Nārāyaņa, (33) Hari, (34) Kṛshṇa, (35) Paraśurāma, (36) Rāma Dhanurdhara (Rāma Dāśarathi), (37) Vedavid, (38) Kalkin, and (39) Pātālaśayana. In this list one can recognise not only the ten stereotyped avatāras (Matsya, Kūrma, Varāha, Narasimha, Vāmana, Paraśurāma, Rāghava Rāma, Balarāma, Buddha and Kalkin), sometimes under different names, but also at least two vyūhas (Sankarshana-Balarāma under the name of Ananta, and Pradyumna as Kāntātman), a few subvyūhas (such as Padmanābha, Madhusūdana and others). and possibly a few Vidyeśvaras.4

Antaryāmin and archā, the two other aspects of the Lord, are also regarded by the Pāñcharātrins, as avatāras. The Vishvaksena Samhitā lays down that the former is Aniruddha, the inner ruler

¹Although the number of the main incarnations of Vishņu was fixed quite early as ten, their names vary in different lists. Some lists include the names Nārāyaņa, Dattātreya, Māndhātā, Vedavyāsa, Pṛthu-Vainya, etc. by deleting some of the names from the standard list given above.

²Banerjea, PTR, p. 46.

³ Ibid

^{*}Vāgīśvara and Lokanātha may or may not be the Mahāyāna deities of the same name.

of all embodied souls.¹ The archā or images of the vyūha and vibhava aspects of the Lord, which were object of great veneration and one-souled devotion (ekātmikā bhakti) were euphemistically described as the very śrīvigrahas (auspicious bodies—tanu, vapu, bera, etc.) of the Lord and his various forms.² The Śālagrāma stone, the approved emblem of the God, is worshipped in cases where images are not available. But the Śālagramas are not enshrined in the main sanctum which must contain an image (vigraha) of the Lord.

Incarnations of Vishņu: Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha

According to many scholars the first few incarnations—Matsya (fish) Kūrma (tortoise), Varāha (boar), Nṛṣiṁha (man-lion) and Vāmana (dwarf)—seem to indicate a gradual evolution. The next three incarnations, Paraśurāma, Rāma Dāśarathi and Kṛṣhṇa belong to mythical epochs—the first two to Tretā and the last one to the end of Dvāpara. The Buddha is clearly a later addition, an attempt to include a historical figure in the list while Kalkin represents the hope of the devotees for the future.

The Fish incarnation is first mentioned in the SB where Manu is saved by a fish during the Deluge. The identity of the fish is not given in the $Br\bar{a}hmana$, but the Mbh. makes Prajāpati the fish. The Epic and HV lists of the incarnations do not include the fish. It is the Purāṇas which identify Manu's fish with Vishṇu. Obviously the concept of the Fish incarnation was borrowed by the Vaishṇava sect from some tribe which had fish as its totem. The same appears to be the case with Kaśyāpa or tortoise incarnation. The Śatapatha $Br\bar{a}hmana$ mentions the cosmic tortoise as the incarnation of Prajāpati and the Mbh. knows the Tortoise who supported the earth on his back at the time of the churning of the ocean. But the $Br\bar{a}hmana$ and the Mbh. do not connect him with Vishṇu. It is only in the Purāṇas that we hear of Vishṇu's descent in the shape of

¹Banerjea, op. cit., p. 47.

²Ibid. The Nārada Pāñcharātra lays down that Hari is to be always worshipped in the form of images and no Pāñcharātrin should stay or eat in a house or a village in which there are no vigrahas of the Lord. However the Pāñcharātrins had scant regard for the priests of their temples because they used images of god as means of their livelihood.

a tortoise to support Mount Mandara at the time of the churning of the ocean. The $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$, also identifies tortoise with $N\bar{a}r\bar{a}ya\bar{p}a$.

Varāha, the Boar incarnation, seems to have been originally a a pre-Aryan cult of the sacred pig. The RV speaks of a Boar, hostile to the Aryans and killed by Indra, and the TS refers to a boar who kept the wealth of the asuras on the other side of the hills. He was smoten by Vishņu and was thus his adversary. The SB however refers to a boar named Emusha who raised the earth from the primeval waters, and identifies him with Prajāpati. The Mbh., HV and the Purāṇas mention the slaughter of demon Hiraṇyāksha by Vishṇu in his Boar incarnation. Gonda has discussed in detail the connection of the boar with fertility. The Vishṇudharmottara prescribes the worship of the Varāha incarnation of Vishṇu as a preliminary to agricultural operations. We have an iconographic representation of this incarnation in an Udayagiri cave of c. 400 and on a fifth century Bhitargaon plaque.

An inscription of the time of Budhagupta (476-95 A.D.) also speaks of the two gods Kokāmukhasvāmin and Švetavarāhasvāmin. Raychaudhuri believes that both the gods refer to the Boar incarnation of Vishņu. The Raghuvamsa and the Rāvanavaho refer to the Mahāvarāha and the Ādivarāha forms of the god.

Narasimha and Vāmana

With the exception of a late passage of the $T\bar{A}$ there is no reference to Narasimha in the Vedic literature though some elements of the legend of Narasimha avatāra may have been derived from the legends of Indra and the demon Namuchi. The Mbh., HV and the Purāṇas introduce the legend of Narasimha avatāra. The HV relates that the gods requested Vishṇu to destroy the demon king Hiraṇyakaśipu, the father of bhakta Prahlāda. Vishṇu descended in the man-lion form and slew the demon king. the Vishṇudharmottara prescribes his worship for removing all hindrances, pacifying the harmful effects of evil stars, and avoiding thieves and wild animals in the dark. The Narasimha-stotra and Narasimha-mantra are also regarded as efficacious for curing diseases and preventing calamities.²

¹It is significant to note that in earlier texts all three--Matsya, Kūrma and Varāha—were regarded as the incarnations of Prajāpati (Rāmakathā, p. 147).

²Sarma, M.V. Sridatta, 'The Incarnation of the Man-Lion', Vedānta Kesarī, LI, No. 2, 1964, pp. 185-91.

The Vishnudharmottara places the Man-lion incarnation of the god in the Madra country and even to-day the worship of Narasimha is very popular in the Kangra region.

The Dwarf or Vāmana avatāra of Vishņu seems to be a mythological elaboration of the story of his three steps mentioned in the RV (supra). According to it the demon king Bali conquered the whole world and threatened the gods. When the king was performing a sacrifice, Vishnu assumed the form of a dwarf and begged as much land as he could measure in three strides. When Bali granted his request, Vishņu magnified his dimensions, covered heaven, atmosphere and earth and pushed Bali into hell. The Mbh. relates that Aditi gave birth to the Adityas of whom Vishnu was a dwarf. But from his strides "the gods' prosperity increased and the demons were defeated". The HV includes the dwarf in its lists of incarnations and also narrates the story of the destruction of Bali. The Junagadh inscription of Skandagupta (455 A.D.) begins with an invocation to the Dwarf incarnation of Vishnu. The dwarf legend perhaps hints at the suppression of the cult of Bali, for Varahamihira gives instructions for making the cult images of king Bali.

The tripādavikrama, as this feat of Vishņu is commonly known, is immortalized by the worship of his footprints in many forms.¹ At Gayā his supposed footprints are daily worshipped by pilgrims.

Paraśurāma

As Paraśurāma and Rāma Dāśarathi, Vishņu is made some-what hostile to himself. As Paraśurāma, he descended to destroy Kārtta-vīrya Arjuna as also to annihilate the Kshatriyas as a class. And he did destroy the Kshatriyas twenty-one times. This action of his symbolizes the conflict between the Brāhmaṇas and the Kshatriyas. He was solidly on the side of the Brāhmaṇas. The Kshatriyas had become a threat to the Brāhmaṇical values; by extirpating them Paraśurāma saved these values. Banerjea calls him an Āveśāvatāra (temporarily possessed by Vishṇu).²

The apotheosis of Parasurāma was the work of the Bhṛgu Brāhmaṇas, the redactors of the Mbh. Outside their circle he does not seem to have been much popular. His identification with

¹Jaiswal, S., 'Foot Prints of Vishņu', PIHC, 1964, p. 90f.

²Banerjea, J.N., DHI, p. 419 f.

Vishnu occurs only once in the Mbh., otherwise he appears simply as a great legendary hero. However, his glorification, as Sukthankar has shown, was not approved by a section of the Brahmanas, who were the custodians of the Rāmā. This Epic, invariably presents the Bhargavas, including Parasurama in an unfavourable light. It relates the defeat of Parasurama at the hands of Dāsarathi Rāma, a greater incarnation of the same god. In the words of Banerjea the avatārahood left Parasurāma as soon as Dāsarathi Rāma appeared on the scene, and passed on to the latter.

Dāśarathi Rāma

As Rāmachandra, son of Dasaratha, Vishņu came down to destroy Rāvaņa, the demon king of Lankā. His story as narrated in the Rāmā, is unknown to the Vedic literature. As shown by Father Bulcke, though the RV refers to Ikshvaku, Daśaratha and Rāma, yet there is nothing to show that they had any thing to do with the characters of the Rāmā. However the Rāma story has much in common with the Vedic tales of demon-killing.2 His mighty adversary Ravana, made almost invincible through divine boons, is a parallel of Vitra and Namuchi. The agricultural associations of these gods are preserved in Sītā, literally the furrow, who is an important agricultural goddess in the Grhya sūtras. She was the daughter of the plough-bannered (Sīradhvaja) Janaka. Janaka found her in sītā or furrow; hence she was called Sītā. She was ayonijā (not born from the womb), and she did not die but returned to the womb of earth.

The avatārahood of Rāma is not mentioned in the Ashṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini, the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali or any inscription of the pre-Christian period. However, the popularity and ethical nature of the Rāma legends made Rāma eminently suitable for the role of an incarnation of Vishnu which finds mention for the first time3 in the Nārāyaṇīya, the Raghuvamsa of Kālidāsa and the Purāṇas. In the Daśaratha Jātaka he figures as a Bodhisattva. Its story differs from that of Valmiki on some very important points. It

¹Bulcke, Rāmakathā, 1962, p. 25.

²For the identity of Rāma and Indra-Parjanya see Jacobi, Rāmāyana, p. 131, 134; also see Gonda, op. cit., p. 161 f.

⁸According to Bulcke from the first century B.C. (op. cit., p. 149).

speaks of Daśaratha as a king of Vārāṇasī (not Ayodhyā) and makes Rāma, Lakshmaṇa and Sītā, children of the first wife of Daśaratha, and Bharata their step brother. The Anāmaka jātaka, which was translated into Chinese in 251 A.D. shows acquaintance with his story. The Daśaratha Kathānam, which was translated into Chinese in 472 A.D. and is in remarkable agreement with the Rāmā., attributes to him the prowess of Nārāyaṇa. In the Rāmā. Rāma appears as an incarnation of Vishṇu only in the Bālakāṇḍa and the Uttarakāṇḍa and soms other passages which are generally regarded as later additions. Elsewhere he is usually depicted as an ideal hero (cf. supra, p. 98-9).1

Buddha, Kalkin and Others

Kṛshṇa is a pūrṇāvatāra, the total incarnation of Vishṇu, unlike the others who represent him only partially (amśāvatāra); the concept of the pūrṇāvatāra of Rāma was a later development.² Kṛshṇa is the divine hero of the Mbh. as Rāma is of the Rāmā. We have discussed the avatārahood of Kṛshṇa in the preceding Chapter.

During the Gupta period the popular mind identified the Buddha with Nārāyaṇa. It was partly the result of a deliberate attempt on the part of the Brāhmaṇas to absorb Buddhism, and partly of the movement which was rooted in those social conditions which had brought Brāhmaṇism and Buddhism nearer.

However, the identification of the Buddha was not at first favourably received by the Vaishnavas who put forward the view that Vishnu incarnated himself as Māyāmoha (Buddha) in order to preach wrong doctrines to and bring about the destruction of those who are opposed to the orthodox tradition. Orthodox writers such as Kumārila did not recognise the Buddha incarnation of Nārāyaṇa, and the Vṛddha Hārīta Smṛti explicitly forbids the worship of the Buddha. However, in the Ahirbudhnya Sāmhitā, the Buddha is mentioned as Śāntātman. In the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva it is said that Nārāyaṇa incarnated himself as the Buddha out of compassion for animals.

Kalkin was recognised as the tenth incarnation fairly early. The legend of Kalkin Vishnuyasas is narrated in the Āranyaka-

¹Bulcke, Rāmakathā, Prayāga, 1962, p. 129 ff.

²Op. Cit., p. 742.

parvan of the Mbh. It is supposed that he will appear at the end of the Kali age on a horse-back to uproot the Mlechchhas and establish the dharma. His conception may have been inspired by the idea of Maitreya, the future Buddha. In the Puranas he became the symbol of the ultimate triumph of Brahmanism. Some scholars believe that a few featurs of his legend are based on some actual historical events.

Balarāma, also known as Sankarshana, Ananta and Haladhara is a comparatively obscure hero in the Mbh. We have discussed him in detail in a preceding section.

Dattātreya also appears to have been an important incarnation of Vishņu. He is mentioned in several early lists. The Purāņas represent him as a forester given to strong liquor, surrounded by women and always in a state of ecstasy. Probably he was originally a god of some semi-civilized tribe. In the Mārkandeya P. it is said that he should be worshipped with the offerings of meat, wine, perfume and garlands to the accompaniment of music. He is also regarded as the author of several Tantrika texts.

Vishnu's Female Partners

A number of goddesses have been associated with Vishnu-Nārāyaņa. In the AV (V. 7, 47) Sinīvalī is explicitly called Vishņu's Sometimes Sarasvatī is also his wife. In the later North and North-Eastern reliefs Śrī and Pushți are almost invariably shown as his principal companions while in the South Indian ones the place of Pushti is taken by Bhūdevī (Pṛthivī). The Baudhāyana D.S. includes Śrī, Sarasvatī, Tushti and Pushti among the goddesses of the Vaishnava pantheon. In some text Nīlādevī is also mentioned as the consort of Vishnu but she is not worshipped independently and her images are not found.1

The association of Śrī-Lakshmī with Vishņu-Nārāyaņa is related in the Śrī Sūkta of the Khila section of the RV which in the edition of Max Müller contains twenty-nine hymns. But this association is mentioned in the Sūkta after the fifteenth hymn while all its hymns after the fifteenth are regarded as later interpolations.2 The Agni

¹Sinha, op. cit, p. 139.

^aThe 16th verse of this Sūkta is a phalaśruti and according to some ancient texts the Sukta contained only 15 verses (Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 102).

Purana explicitly states that only its first fifteen hymns belong to the RV.1 From the available evidence it appears that the concept that Śrī-Lakshmī is the wife of Vishņu-Nārāyaņa became popular not earlier than the time of the later sections of the Mbh. In them she is described as the wife of Vishnu-Nārāyana. Similarly, the wives of his human incarnations (such as Sītā the wife of Rāma. Rukmiņī, the wife of Kṛshṇa, etc.) are regarded as the incarnations of Śrī-Lakshmī. In the Mbh. at one place Śrī tells Rukminī that she lives in spirit with everyone excepting those who cause intermixture of castes and neglect varņa duties; but with Nārāyaņa she dwells in embodied form. In the Rāmā., the Vishņu P., other Purāņas, several other ancient texts such as the Raghuvamsa, the Amarakośa as well the inscriptions of the Gugta age2 she is usually mentioned as the wife of Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu. The Jayākhya Samhitā mentions Vishņu as Kamalākāmuka and Lakshmīvallabha. Vishnudharmottara prescribes that the two-armed images Lakshmī should be placed by the side of Vishņu while his fourarmed images are to be established independently.

Following Sister Nivedita Raychaudhuri opines that the enthronement of Lakshmi by the side of Nārāyaņa and the prominence given to the Gupta queens in the same period indicate "the assertion of the rights of women".3 But S. Jaiswal rightly disagrees with this opinion and relates the phenomenon of the acceptance of Śrī-Lakshmī as the wife of Vishnu with the subordination of the Lakshmi cult to that of Vishnu and the impact of the Sāmkhya doctrine of Prakṛti-Purusha duality on Vaishņavism.4 The Vaishņava texts mention Śrī-Lakshmī as the Sakti of Vishņu through whom he performs the task of creation, sustenance and destruction of the universe. The Vishnudharmottara describes Lakshmī as Vaishņavīśakti and equates Vishņu and Śrī with Purusha and Prakṛti. The Ahirbudhnya Samhitā (sixth century A.D.) identifies Lakshmī as energy of Vishņu through which he carries on his cosmological activities.5 Whether or not she had her own separate cult is difficult to say. J.N. Banerjea says that she

¹Dasgupta, S. B., Śrī Rādhā kā Kramavikāsa, in Hindi, p. 20.

²Goyal, S. R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, Meerut, 1984, p. 233.

^{*}EHVS, p. 106.

⁴Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 105.

For references vide, Jaiswal, op. cit., pp. 108-9.

did not have, but the Milindapañho seems to refer to a distinct sect of this goddess.1

Origin and Nature of Śri-Lakshmi

Śrī and Lakshmī were originally two different goddesses. The Vājasaneyī Samhitā (XXXI.22) speaks of them as two wives of Purusha. In the $T\overline{A}$ (III.13.2) the two wives of Purusha are named as Hrī and Śrī. Later on in the Brāhmaņa-Upanishad period Śrī and Lakshmī were identified. The Śrī Sūkta of the RV composed in the Middle Vedic Age is the earliest text eulogising Śrī whom it also calls Lakshmī. In the Epics and other later works these two names are used indiscriminately for the same goddess. In the Santiparvan of the Mbh. Srī explicitly says that she is also known as Lakshmī. But quite often their separate identity was also recalled, for the Epics sometimes refer to them as different goddesses (e.g. Rāmā. III. 46.17).

J. Gonda explains the appelative Lakshmī as 'mark', 'sign', 'token' and opines that she originally represented lakshman (derived from laksh, 'to know by means of characteristics or signs', evidence of prognostication of luck and prosperity).'2 As regards Śrī, Oldenberg3 took it in the sense of 'beauty', and 'splendour' while in the opinion of some German scholars4 she was a goddess of fertility of pre-Aryan origin. Her name Śrī has been derived from the same root from which the Latin name Ceres, the corn goddess, is derived. The Śrī Sukta describes her as of moist nature (ārdrā), ever-nourished (nityapushṭā) and abounding in cowdung (karishiṇī). She is said to have produced offsprings through mire (kardama) and is described as living in a lotus (padmesthita) and of the colour of a lotus (padmavarnā).5 According to Coomaraswamy lotus is also a symbol of water and as such it connects her with fertility. Similarly the TA states that she is a mṛtikābhimānī devatā and connects her with fertility. Her association with vegetation is also shown by the fact that bilva or śriphala is regarded as

¹Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 95.

²Gonda, J., AEV, p. 21.

^aQuoted by Motichandra, JUPHS, XXI, 1948, p. 19-20.

⁴Cf. Gonda, AEV, pp. 212-3, for references,

The Eastern Art, I, p. 178.

specially hers. Gonda therefore feels that she was originally the

guardian deity of the farmers.1

Śrī-Lakshmī is also associated with kine. In the Śrī Sūkta she is called hariṇī and on some Kuṇinda coins she appears with a deer by her side.² According to a legend she left the asuras because they did not look after their kine properly. In the Mbh. she is said to dwell in the urine and dung of the kine.

As the goddess related with fertility and kine Srī-Lakshmī was bound to be pupular with herdsmen-agriculturist masses and their leaders, the merchants and traders, who taken together comprised the third varna of the Hindu society. And once she was accepted as the goddess of corn and cattle, that is wealth in those days, her cult began to attract all sections of society and she was conceived in all possible forms such as Brāhmīśrī (the śrī of holy men) Rājyaśrī (the royal glory), Dhanalakshmī (the goddess of riches), Nagaralakshmī (goddess of city), Grhalakshmī, Vāņijyalakshmī, Svargalakshmī, Jayalakshmi, etc. But as she was primarily considered to be the goddess of wealth and as wealth does not stay with anyone for long, she earned the dubious distinction of being regarded as fickleminded (chañchalā). However her abstract name 'Šrī' helped her in associating herself with many abstract qualities as (modesty), Medhā (talent), Dhṛti (patience), Pushṭi (sustenance), Kshānti (forgiveness), Lajjā (bashfulness), Kīrti (fame), Bhūti (prosperity), Rati (love), etc.4

According to the Buddhist legends Śrī-Lakshmī was the daughter of Dhatarattha.⁵ The Śatapatha makes her the daughter of Prajāpati and the Mbh. of Brahmā. In the Mbh. she is also described as the daughter of Daksha, the wife of Dharma and the mother of Dhātr and Vidhātr.⁶ In the Śāntiparvan, however, it is recorded

¹AEV, p. 214.

²Lahiri, Bela, 'Lakşmī on Early Indian Coins', Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakşmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature, (FAI, LSAL), ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 126-31.

³Mukhopadhyaya, M., 'Laksmī and Sarasvatī in Sanskrit Inscriptions', FAI, LSAL, p. 111.

⁴CA, p. 452.

Cf. Haldar, J.R., 'Laksmī in Pāli Literature', FAI, LSAL, pp. 142-4.

Jaiswal, op. cit., p. 96. In the Vishnu P. she is called the sister of Dhātā and Vidhātā.

that she was born from a golden coloured lotus which sprang from Vishnu's forehead. She is also regarded as the daughter of Bhrgu who premulgated the first code of sacred ordinances. But the best known legend of her origin is that she arose when the ocean of milk was churned by gods and demons to procure amrta (nectar). According to the Mbh she came out of the ocean alongwith soma (moon), surā (wine), apsarās, Airāvata, Uchchaiśravas, Kalpavrksha or Pārijāta, the jewel Kaustubha, kālakūţa (poison) and Dhanvantri who carried the nectar pot in his hand.2

Śrī-Lakshmī is characterised by certain non-Aryan features also. Her association with elephants is one of them. In some of her earliest representations on coins and seals3 she appears in the Gaja-Lakshmi form.4 In the Śri Sūkta she is described as exulting at the sound of elephants (hastināda pramodinī). In the Samudramanthana legend when she emerges out of ocean she is bathed by the elephants of quarters (Vishnu P., II.9.102). According to S. Jaiswal as the Sanskrit word naga means both elephant and serpent and was used as the appelation of a non-Aryan tribe also, it may be surmised that the cult of the mother-goddess, who was associated with the nagas, originally belonged to some non-Aryan tribe.5 According to a Mbh. (XIII.81.6) legend Śrī first lived with asuras and came to live with Indra after the degradation of the former as a result of which they were destroyed. Elsewhere the Epic (Mbh. XII.124.54-60) says that assuming the form of a Brāhmaṇa Indra begged Śrī from the demon king Prahlāda and as soon as Prahlada agreed to the request, Śrī left the daityas. Her contact with the asuras is further emphasized by her association with Kubera, the lord of the asuras.

Syncretistic Nature of Śrī-Lakshmī

Like Nārāyaṇa-Vishņu Śrī-Lakshmī was also a syncretistic

¹Sinha, op. cit., p. 142.

²There are found some variations in the Epic and Paurānika versions of this myth. For its detailed analysis vide Chatterji, B., 'The Story of Samudramanthana', JAIH, V, pp. 56-77.

³Thaplyal, K. K., 'Gaja Laksmi on Seals', Foreigners in Ancient India and Laksmī and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature, Calcutta, 1970, pp. 112-125.

^{&#}x27;Lahiri, Bela, 'Laksmi on Early Indian Coins', FAI, LSAL, pp. 126-31. Jaiswal, S., op. cit., p. 91.

deity. She acquired features of many tribal and local goddesses and also of the divinities of other sects. Some similarity between the Rgvedic Ushā and later Lakshmī has been noticed by scholars. Ushā was the wife of sun and Lakshmī was also conceived as the wife of a solar god Vishņu. Like Ushā Lakshmī is also beautiful. clothed in red, ever fresh and benefactor of humanity.1 Ushā has a sister in Nakta or Night; Lakshmī has in Alakshmī (poverty or grief).2 According to M. Foucher in the Buddhist literature she is mentioned as Māyā, the mother of the Buddha.3 A set of fourteen Jaina symbols appearing in the dreams of Triśalā and Devananda are closely associated with Śrī also. The symbols are elephant, bull, lion, anointing of Śrī-Lakshmī, garland, moon, sun, flag, vase, lotus-lake, ocean, celetial abode, heap of jewels and a flame. Śrī was included among Yakshinis also. The Śrī Sūkta mentions her relationship with Kubera and Yaksha Maņibhadra. At Bharhut also Sirimā appears with Yakshiņīs.

The HV (III.12.4) equates Śrī Lakshmī with Pṛthivī. She shares the symbol of makara with other river goddesses. According to the Linga P. and the Devī māhātmya of the Mārkandeya P. the various synonyms of the Devī are Durgā, Chaṇdī, Lakshmī, Sarasvatī and Mahākālī. B.N. Mukherjee has shown that the syncretism of Umā-Śrī with some foreign goddesses was also achieved in the Kushāṇa period. The Aṅgavijjā, a Prakrit text of the Kushāṇa age, lists Śrī and Lachchhī (Lakshmī) not only with the Indian goddesses Sītā and Bhagavatī but also with foreign goddesses such as Apalā (Greek goddess Pallas Athene), Aṇāditā (Avestan goddess Anahita), Airāṇī (Roman goddess Irene), Itimissakesi (Greek goddess Artemis) and Sālimālinī (Selene, the moon goddess). In the Gupta Age the goddess Pishtapurī or Pishṭapurikādevī, probably originally the goddess of Pishṭapura (mod. Pīthāpuram in Tamilnad), who is mentioned in two inscriptions of

¹Bhattacharji, Sukumari, *The Indian Theogony*, p. 163; the idea has been elaborated by S. Dhawan ('Rgvedic Uṣā and Her Transformation as Śri', *Rhythm of History*, I, 1973-74, pp. 33-42). Cf. also Chaudhary, M. N., 'The Mother Goddess Conception in the Vedic Literature', *Indian Culture*, VIII, 1941, p. 77 ff.

aCA, p. 452.

^{*}Cf. Motichandra, 'Studies in the Cult of Mother Goddess in Ancient India,'
Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, No. 12, 1973, p. 3.

*Ibid., p. 7 ff.

529 and 534 A.D., was identified with Lakshmī. Durgā and Lakshmī were also intimately related with each other. The Vishņudharmottara (III.8.4) includes Devī and Vibhāvarī among the names of Lakshmī; these were originally applied to Durgā. On some Gupta coins Lakshmī is shown seated on a lion (simhavāhinī) though traditionally lion is the vāhana of Durgā. In a Khajuraho image also couchant lion is depicted below the seat of a four-armed Lakshmī. In the month of Aśvin on the last day of Kṛṣhṇapaksha ceremonies are held in honour of both Lakshmī and Bhavānī. Even Skanda's wife Devasenā has Lakshmī as one of her names. Identification of Lakshmī with Ekānaṃśā is also not unknown.

Association of Śrī-Lakshmī with other Gods

In the Śrī Sūkta Śrī is associated with Agni Jātaveda. But in the early period of her history she was more intimately associated with Indra, probably because at that time Indra was the mightiest of all gods. In a passage of the Mbh. Draupadī is described as the incarnation of Śrī and the five Pāṇḍavas of the former Indras. At one time Śrī was linked with Kārttikeya also. In the Epics she is associated with the Suparṇas who are marked with Śrīvatsa (Mbh. V. 99.5) and with Varuṇa (Rāmā. VII. 56.2). In the Brāhmaṇical mythology, Kubera is also associated with Lakshmī or Śrī, the deity of the Ashṭanidhis; in later periods, he claimed her to be his wife. The Buddhist counterpart of Kubera is Jambhala whose wife, according to the Mahāyāna tradition, is Vasudharā who is the Buddhist adaptation of the earth goddess Bhūmi or Pṛthivī, another wife of Vishnu.

Several festivals are held in honour of Śrī-Lakshmī. One is held on the pañchamī of the Śuklapaksha of Māgha when she is identified with Sarasvatī, though in literature and inscriptions it is

¹Fleet, Corpus, III, Nos. 25 and 30.

²Ibid., pp. 113-4, 130; Gonda, op. cit., p. 218.

³Dikshit, R. K., 'Simhavāhinī Lakshmī', JNSI, XXVI, p. 102 f.

⁴PIHC, 1960, p. 83.

⁵ Jaiswal, op. cit., pp. 98-9.

⁶CA, p. 452.

usually stated that there is an inborn hostility between Lakshmī, the goddess of wealth, and Sarasvatī, the goddess of learning¹ (as worldly riches and learning are rarely found with one person).² In the festival of Dīpāvalī celebrated on the last day of the Kṛshṇapaksha of the month of Kārttika, she is specially worshipped with Gaṇeśa.

The Buddhist Sirimā is represented in the early art of Bharhut Sānchī, Bodhagayā, etc. either as standing or seated on a lotus and being bathed by two elephants. The seals from Basarh, Bhita, Nalanda, Rajghat, Ahichchhatrā and Eran and also those of the kings of Śarabhapura and Tripurī as well as the coins from Kauśāmbī, Ayodhyā, Ujjayinī Mathurā and Panchāla etc. and those of some of the foreign rulers portray the Gajalakshmī device. Śrī-Lakshmī continued to appear on the Gupta coins as well as on post-Gupta issues in various poses and forms. The carved stone discs depicting the mother-goddess found from Murtazaganj, Kauśāmbī, Vārāṇasī and other sites throw welcome light on the cult aspects of Lakshmī which literature fails to enlighten.

Stages in the Progress of Vaishnavism: pre-Gupta Period

The religion taught by Kṛshṇa, which ultimately coalesced with several Brāhmaṇical and popular cults to form the great federation or religions known as Vaishṇavism, seems to have been first adopted by his own Yādava-Vṛshṇi tribe, especially by its Sātvata sept to which he himself belonged. In the Śāntiparvan we often find the name Sātvta used as a synonym for Bhāgavata without any ethnic significance whatever. In the Tusam Rock Inscription of the fourth or fifth century A.D.³ an Āryya-Sātvata-Yogāchāryya is mentioned.

It is a noticeable fact that the Bhāgavatas are almost wholly ignored or given no particular prominence in the early Buddhist inscriptions and literature but are constantly mentioned from the time of Pāṇini onwards in the records of the western part of

¹Cf. Goyal, S. R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 26.

²In Mahāummagga Jātaka the Buddha refutes this idea (cf. FAI, LSAL, p. 14).

³Fleet, Corpus, III, p. 270.

Northern India. The Anguttara Nikāya mentions the Ājīvikas, the Nigaņṭhas or Jainas, the Muṇḍa-Sāvakas, the Jaṭilakas, the Paribbājakas, the Māgandikas, the Tedaṇḍikas, the Aviruddhakas, the Gotamakas and the Devadhammikas,¹ but never the Vāsudevakas and the Ārjunakas. The Seventh Pillar Edict of Aśoka, which mentions the Brāhmaṇas, the Ājīvikas and the Nigaṇṭhas is silent about the Bhāgavatas. There is only a solitary reference to the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Baladeva in a passage of the Niddesa which mentions the Vāsudevakas alongwith the worshippers of birds, beasts etc. (supra, p. 97 f.).

In the western and north-western parts of India the situation is different. Pāṇini's reference to the worshippers of Vāsudeva and Arjuna in a sūtra of his Āshṭādhyāyī (IV.3.98) is one of the earliest mentions of the exclusive worshippers of Vāsudeva and Arjuna. We have discussed the evidence of Pāṇini in detail in Chapters 4 and 7. The Classical authors also inform that the army of Porus carried images of Heracles (here most likely they refers to Kṛṣhṇa) though the Heracles mentioned in connection with Mathurā by Megasthenes reminds one of Manu Vaivasvata (pp. 181-7). However, it does not mean that Bhāgavatism was not known in the Mathurā region when the Greek ambassador came. On the contrary his reference to Kṛṣhṇapura indicates to its popularity there.

The next stage in the progress of Vaishnavism is seen in Patañjali's Mahābhāshya which mentions the names of Svaphalka, Chaitraka and Ugrasena as belonging to the Andhaka clan and those of Vāsudeva, Baladeva and Vishvaksena to the Vṛshṇi group, both evidently belonging to the same tribe. Further, he alludes to Satyabhāmā, one of the chief queens of Kṛshṇa, the names the followers of Akrūra and Vāsudeva, Vāsudeva's fight with his maternal uncle Kamsa, and the latter's defeat and destruction at the hands of the former. Patañjali also notes that Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa was the younger brother of Sankarshaṇa. Two other names of Baladeva-Sankarshaṇa viz. Rāma and Rauhiṇeya, and the name Keśava of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa were also known to him. He also refers to the temples that were erected for Dhanapati (the Yaksha king Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa), Rāma (Sankarshaṇa-Baladeva) and Keśava (Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa).

¹Dialogues of the Buddha, I, p. 220.

By the beginning of the first century Bhāgavatism had certainly overstepped the boundaries of the Mathurā region and had entered Rajasthan, Malwa and Maharashtra, as the Ghosundi inscription of Sarvatāta, the Besnagar inscription of Heliodorus and the Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā prove.

Some years ago were discovered some rare silver coins of the Indo-Greak ruler Agathocles bearing the figures of Chakradhara Kṛshṇa and Balarāma who is shown as bearing hala and mūsala. A four-armed image of Vishṇu-Vāsudeva bearing conch, sword, chakra and godā was found at Malhar. According to K.D. Bajpai it is the earliest image of Vāsudeva so far discovered.

Spread of Vaishnavism in North India in the Gupta Age

In the Kushāṇa age Vaishṇavism did not make much progress though some Kushāņa rulers adopted the nameVāsudeva for themselves. In a large number of epigraphs of the Gupta age Vishņu is mentioned only as Bhagavat without any reference to his name. In the Eran inscription of 484 A.D. the god is called Janārdana. The god Chāngu-Nārāyana, i.e. Nārāyana on Chāngu or Garuda, was worshipped in Nepal before king Manadeva's inscription of 464 A.D.² The Gupta emperors styled themselves as Paramabhāgavata and made Garuda their dynastic emblem, King 'Chandra' mentioned in the Meharauli inscription raised an iron-madeVishnudhvaja in the honour of Vishnu at Vishnupadagiri.3 In the various Gupta inscriptions different legends such as pārijātaharaņa, are alluded to and the god is represented as the troubler of the demons called Punyajana, as the supporting pillar of the three worlds (in the Varāha or Kūrma form), as the slayer of the demons Madhu and Mura, and as the bearer of chakra, gada, the bow of horn and the sword called Nandaka, and as the wearer of the jewel known as Kaustubha and the garland of lotuses. The Bhitari inscription of Skandagupta refers to Kṛshņa

¹Bajpai, K. D., 'Sāttvata-Vaishņava Dharma ke Mahān Srota — Śrī Kṛshṇa', Prof. Baladeva Upādhyāya Abhinandana Grantha, Allahabad, 1983, pp. 101-9; Bajpai and Pandey, Malhara, 1975-8, Sagar, 1978, p. 10.

²Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanitika aura Sāmskṛtika Itihāsa, Varanasi, 1973, p. 168 f.

³Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 79 f.

approaching his mother Devakī after having slain his enemies.1 The Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D., which speaks of a worshipper of Vishnu building a temple, full of the Dakinis, points to the influence of the Tantrika cult of the mother-goddess on the Vaishnavas.2 In the fifth century, the Maukhari chief Anantavarman installed an image of Krshna in one of the caves in the Nāgarjunī hill.

Vaishnavism in North India: post-Gupta Developments: the Emergence of Śrī Rādhā

The popularity of Vaishnavism in North Indian royal dynasties declined in the post-Gupta age. Toramāņa, Mihirakula, Yaśodharman and Harsha—all these were Saivas. In the Pratihara dynasty only Devasakti and Bhoja II were Paramavaishnavas. In other dynasties also kings who described themselves as Vaishpava are fewer in number in comparison to kings professing their faith in Śaivism.

The doctrines of Vaishnavism underwent significant changes in the pot-Pratihara period. The most important of them was the increasing dominance of the Gopalaka aspect of Krshna's peronality and the popularity of his amorous dalliances (rāsakrīḍā etc.) with gopis, particularly with Rādhā, the wife of a near-relation. The Bhagavata P. is the store-house of these legends. The emergence of the Rādhā concept was destined to bring about a great transformation in the nature of popular Vaishnavism. The origin of the Rādhā concept is enveloped in mystery. J.C. Roy has advanced astronomical theory of her origin while some others identify her with Nappinnāi or Punnāi mentioned in the Śīlappadikāram as the wife of Mayavana, the younger brother of Balarama. They were worshipped by milkmaids and danced with pleasure the kuruvai dance (the southern counterpart of the north Indian rāsa). But Rādhā is not mentioned by name in any early text3.

¹Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 211.

²Ibid., p. 344 ff.

The only work of the pre-Pratihara period which refers to Radha is the Gāhāsattasai of Hāla. It mentions Rādhā in one of its gāthās. But this work contains many gathas of a very late and uncertain date. Therefore its evidence is of no historical value specially in view of the fact that no other early work mentions her.

including the *Bhāgavata P*, though later Vaishnavas sought to find a covert allusion to her in one of its verses in which Kṛshṇa vanishes with a gopī while other gopīs enviously feel that he must have been propitiated (anayārādhitah) by her (X.30.14). But as pointed out A.K. Majumdar and others in the *Bhāgavata* Kṛshṇa's relations with the gopīs are with their 'entire corporate body' and the later explanation that Rādhā was the chief gopī is foreign to the spirit of the *Bhāgavata*. However, within a few centuries the concept of Rādhā became highly popular and the author of the *Brahmavaivarta P*. even invented the legend of her marriage with Kṛshṇa, though it admits that she was much older than him.³

The most poetic and also the most realistic description of the amorous relations of Kṛshṇa and Rādhā is given in the Gītagovinda of Jayadeva (12th century). It is a highly vernerated poem and the Vaishṇavas explain its erotic elements away as allegorical or symbolical representations of the highest spiritual ideals.⁴

Growth of Rāma Cult

At the present day the cult of Rāma is widely popular in India and even abroad, but its growth was actually an early medieval phenomenon. It is true that Rāma was regarded as an incarnation of Vishņu from the very early times (supra, p. 221 f.) but the cult of Rāma came into existence, according to R.G. Bhandarkar, in about the 11th century A.D.⁵ According to Schrader also the Vaishņava Samhitās, which speak of the ekāntika bhakti of Rāma, were composed later as a result of the influence of the Pāncharātra literature. However it must be admitted that worship of Rāma was quite well-known in the Gupta age. The Vishņudharmottara and the Brhatsamhitā give

¹Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Kṛshṇaval labhā Śrīrādhā kā Āvirbhāva', Bhāratī, Bombay, 1965, pp. 55-9.

²Majumdar, A.K., ABORI, XXXVI, pp. 236 and 250.

²For a historical and cultural study of the origin and development of the Rādhā concept vide, Majumdar, B.B., Kṛṣṇa in History and Legend, Ch. V; Upadhyaya, B., Bhāratīya Vāṅgamaya men Śrīrādhā, Patna, 1963; Dasgupta, S.B., Śrīrādhā ka Kramavikāsa, Varanasi, 1956; Majumdar, A.K., 'A Note on the Development of the Rādhā Cult', ABORI, XXXVI, 1955, pp. 231-57.

^{*}The Struggle for Empire, p. 436.

Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 66.

Bulcke, C., Rāmakathā, p. 154; Cf. also Raychaudhuri, EHVS, p. 105.

rules for making the images of Rāma.¹ Prabhāvatīguptā, the Vākāṭaka queen, is mentioned as the devotee of Rāmagirisvāmin. According to Bulcke the cult of Rāma grew in the South. The earliest hymns of the Āļvārs mention Rāma as an incarnation of Vishņu. Rāmānuja makes a special mention of Rāmāvatāra in his Śrībhāshya. The Agastya Samhitā, Kalirāghava, Brhadrāghava and Rāghavīyasamhitā of the Śrī Vaishṇava sect propound dāsyabhakti of Rāma. Several sectarian Upanishads—Rāmapūrvatāpanīya, Rāmottaratāpanīya and Rāmarahasys are concerned with the worship of Rāma. The Rāmagītā, composed after the pattern of the Bhagavadgītā advocates the paramabrahmahood of Rāma.

An important medieval development in the Rāma cult was the introduction of eroticism in it.² The bālalīlā of Rāma described in the Ādhyātma Rāmāyaṇa, his muralīdhara form and his rāsalīlā supposedly performed by him at Ayodhyā and Chitrakūṭa and described in several medieval works were certainly the result of the influence on the Rāma bhakti of the erotic devotion (mādhurya bhakti) developed in the Kṛṣhṇa cult.³

Spread of Vaishnavism in the Deccan and South India

The prevalence of the worship of Vāsudeva and Sankarshana in the Deccan is first mentioned in the Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā. In the second century A.D. Gautamīputra Šātakarņi is described in a Nasik record as equal to Rāma (Balarāma) and Keśava. In the same century the Chinna inscription begins with the adoration of Vāsudeva while the early Pallava charters refer to a devakula of Nārāyaṇa and the name Vishṇugopa assumed by a Pallava ruler. The introduction of Bhāgavatism in the Far South is also indicated by the name of the Pāṇḍya capital Madurā, adopted from that of Mathurā and by the confused stories about the relationship of the Pāṇḍyas with the Pāṇḍavas (supra, p. 186).

The bas-reliefs at Badami, belonging to the period of early Chālukya kings, some of whom are styled as *Paramabhāgavata*, depict Vishņu lying on a serpent with Lakshmī massaging his feet. The Varāha, Narasimha and Vāmana avatāras are also found in the

¹Bulcke, C., Rāmakathā, p. 154; cf. also Raychaudhuri, EHVS, p. 105.

²Cf. Singh, B.P., Rāmabhakti men Rasika Sampradāya, pp. 76. etc.

Bulcke, op. cit., p. 158 f.

⁴Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Bhāratīya Abhilekha Samgraha, p. 424.

⁵Ibid., p. 441.

sculptures of the rock-cut caves at Mamallapuram. The Daśāvatāra and Kailāśanātha temples at Ellora, ascribed to the eighth century, contain representations of the avatāras and other deities of the Vaishņava pantheon.

In the South Indian inscriptions of the Gupta Age references to the temples or dhyajas of the god Vishņu-Nārāyaņa-Vāsudeva are frequently found. The early Pallava and Ganga rulers were devout Bhagavatas. Some of the early Kadamba kings, who call themselves Paramabrahmanya, may have been Vaishnavas. Several southern rulers possibly attempted to suppress Buddhism and Jainism and revive the Brahmanical religion. Some Pallava and Kadamba records attach much importance to the go-brahmana exactly as we find it in the Vaishnava inscriptions from Eran. The Tamil country became the greatest stronghold of the Bhagavata religion giving birth to the Alvars and their celebrated songs in Tamil on bhakti and Kṛshṇa worship. The Alvars also sang in praise of Narayaṇa, Rāma and Vāmana. They were also familiar with Kṛshṇa's dalliances with the gopis and one of them, a lady, regarded herself as a gopi and worshipped the God, her beloved, in that spirit. The Alvars revered the Vedic texts and knew the principal Puranas, and also avocated the recitation of God's name, meditation on his different forms, and his worship in the temples. The Bhagavata P. speaks of the existence of large numbers of the worshippers of Vāsudeva-Nārāyaņa in the Dravida country in the Kali age.1

After the Āļvārs another class of saints known as the Āchāryas arose. The earliest of them was Nāthamuni. He founded the famous Śrī Vaishṇava sect. He was followed in turn by Puṇḍrīkāksha, Rāmamiśra, Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja (supra, p. 65). After Rāmānuja, who died about 1137 A.D., the Śrī Vaishṇavas were divided into two sects—Vaḍakalai or the school of northern learning which believed that moksha is easily available through Sanskrit scriptures like the Vedas, Upanishads and the Gītā than through the Prabandhas called the Tamil Veda, and the Tenkalai or the school of southern learning which held the opposite view.²

¹CA, p. 428.

²The Struggle for Empire, p. 438. Vide, Rangacharya, V., 'Historical Evolution of Śrī Vaiṣṇavism in South India', CHI, IV, pp. 163-85; Raychaudhuri, EHVS, p. 112. ff.

Vaikhānasa and Kaśmīrāgama Schools

Various lists of the schools of Vaishņavism are given in the Vaishņava texts. The Vishņu Samhitā enumerates as many as five schools—the Vaikhānasa, Sātvata, Šikhi, Ekāntika and Mūla (Pāncharātra). In the list of Bhrgu Samhitā Sātvata is replaced by Bhāgavata. As Šikhi and Ekāntika are only different modes of worship, they may easily be omitted. Thus there are only three main schools of Vaishņavism—Vaikhānasa, Sātvata or Bhāgavata and Pāncharātra. Sometimes the Pāncharātra or one of its branches is called Kaśmīrāgama.

The Vaikhānasas are a small but important sect of the Vaishnavas of South India which was founded by the sage Vikhanas who, according to legends, came down to the earth to organise the worship of the Lord in his archā (idol) form. The Vaikhānasas have their own Śrauta-, Gṛhya-and Dharmasūtras. Baudhāyana mentions the Vaikhānasaśāstra which he describes as a guide to the Vānaprasthas. Haradatta in his gloss on Gautama (III. 2) calls Vānaprastha a Vaikhānasa because 'he lives according to the rule promulgated by Vikhanas'. In Kālidāsa's Śakuntalā Dushyanta asks whether Śakuntalā was enjoined to observe Vaikhānasa-vrata.²

Vikhanas, the sūtra author, founded the Vaikhānasa Āgamika school also. It was later elaborated by Bhṛgu, Marīchi, Atri and Kaśyapa. For the Vaikhānasas Vishņu is the Supreme Being; Śrī of Lakshmī is His vibhūti or aiśvarya. She is nityānanda mūla prakṛti śakti (ever blissful grand potential) and assumes different forms to suit his different līlās. She is ever associated with Vishņu in His five-fold states—para, vyūha, vibhava, antaryāmin and archā. The conception of these forms is found in the Pāñcharātra school as well, but the Vaikhānasas place greater emphasis on the archā worship. They would not agree with those hymns of the first three Āļvārs which say: Why visit different shrines when the Lord dwells within the heart. For the Vaikhānasas the worship of archā is the primary duty; other modes of worship are secondary. Also, they do not worship the Āļvārs, Āchāryas and the maṭhādhipatis, do not brand their bodies with śankha, chakra, etc. and do not recite

¹Venkataraman, K.R., 'The Vaikhānasas', CHI, IV, pp. 160-2.

² Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

Tamil *Prabandham* during worship. Though they are mentioned in the north also, they are quite frequently referred to in the Chola inscriptions.

In the Kaśmīrāgama-Pāñcharātra sect the object of devotion is called Vaikuṇṭha. In the Vedic tradition Vaikuṇṭha is the name of Indra while in the epic-Paurāṇika tradition Lord Vishṇu is called Vaikuṇṭha because (a) he took birth from Vikuṇṭhā, the wife of Śubhra (Vishṇu and Bhāgavata Purāṇas) or (b) because he eleminates sins (Bhāgavata). He is conceived as a four-headed god wearing śaṅkha, chakra, gadā and padma. He created his Vaikuṇṭhaloka at the request of His belolved Ramā.¹

¹Cf. Pathak, V.S., 'Vaikuntha kā Vikāsa', Gorakhpur Viśvavidyālaya Sodhapatrikā, 1969-70, pp. 4-10. See also Gonda, AEV, p. 234 ff.

Chapter 9

Origin and Development of Saivism

Prototype of Siva in the Indus Religion

The worship of Siva is rooted in the pre-Vedic period. The central figure around which Saivism started its career was purely mythical.¹ As we have discussed in detail in the first volume of the present work,² the character of Rudra-Siva was formed by the assimilation of the traits of the various deities—Aryan as well as non-Aryan.³ It is now almost certain that the authors of the Indus Valley Civilization worshipped a god who was conceived in human form and was regarded as Paśupati, Yogīrāja, Trimukha (or Chaturmukha), Ūrdhvameḍhu (ethyphallic) and probably Naṭarāja also. The Indus people also worshipped Mother Goddess (probably regarded both as the wife and sister of 'Paśupati'),⁴ phallus (linga), chakras (yonī), nāgas, bull, etc. All these elements are found connected with Śaivism of the historical period and collectively tend to prove

¹The earliest historical figure in Saivism is Lakulīśa. But he flourished probably in the second century B.C. (cf. Ch. 10).

²RHAI, I, Ch. 2, pp. 19-21.

*Some of the traits of Rudra-Śiva have interesting affinities with the features of a non-Indian god also. As we have shown in our Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen (p. 199 f.) and in an article ('Paśchimī Eśia men Śivopāsanā', Bāsantī, Varanasi, 1961, pp. 63-7), in Anatolia, in the early centuries of the second millenium B.C. was worshipped by the Hittites or some other tribes a god whose vāhana and symbol was bull, and whose weapon was paraśu or trident or club. He was also associated with a simhavāhinī goddess and was depicted as surrounded by animals (Paśupati). In the Yazilikaya gallery he is shown in mountaineous surroundings, alongwith a simhavāhinī goddess (ibid., figures 50, 51 and 55 of our Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen).

'Vide our RHAI, I, pp. 24-9; Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen, 1963, p. 551; 'Yajurveda men Rudra kā Svarūpa aura usakā Aitihāsika Mahatva', Bhāratī, Bombay, 1963, p. 130 ff.; 'A Socio-Religous Aspect of the Indus Civilization', Cultural Contours of India, Part II, Jaipur, 1981, pp. 35-8. that Marshall was right when he suggested that the worship of a prototype of Siva was prevalent in the Indus religion.¹

Rudra in the Vedic Samhitas

The next important contribution to the personality of Rudra-Siva was made by the Rgvedic Rudra who was of terrific nature but was amenable to be transformed into a pacific deity.2 Rgvedic Rudra is a comparatively unimportant god with only two and a half complete hymns to him and about 75 casual references in all. But in essence he is not different from the major gods.3 Interestingly, nothing is said in this text about his association with Mother Goddess, Nandi, Triśūla and Yoga and about his linga form. The SV gives him no new features but in the YV we have a clearer though somewhat different picture of his personality. Though it would be too much to say that Rudra in the YV represents the monotheistic stage of the Vedic religion,4 yet it is true that now for the first time he is addressed as a creator god and is described as the overlord of the vegetation, animal world and all the spheres of human life. Further, for the first time he is associated with a goddess named Ambikā (who is described as his sister) and also with mountains (by his epithets Girīśa, Giritra, Girichara etc.). In the RV Rudra was generally associated with rivers, earth, water, trees and mountains; now he has a particular habitat in the Mūjavat For his special attendant Rudra has a mouse (which, in the Paurāņika mythology, was transferred to Gaņeśa). Further, now he is described as the lord of the thieves, robbers, cheats, baldheaded, night-rovers and deformed, as also of the architects, councillors and merchants.

¹The alternative interpretations suggested by some of the critics of Marshall (such as K.A.N. Sastri, CHI, II, pp. 65-7) are far less acceptable. Vide Dandekar, Rudra in the Veda, Poona, p. 42 ff.; Goyal, RHAI, I, p. 20 ff.; J.N. Banerjea, PTR, p. 64. The denunciation of the Śiśnadevāḥ in the RV also supports Marshall's interpretation. Also see Hazra, R.C., 'An Overlooked Aspect of Rgvedic Rudra', JAIH, V, 1971-72, pp. 123-48.

²Banerjea, PTR, p. 63.

³For a detailed study see RHAI, I, pp. 25, 64.

^{&#}x27;This is the view of V.S. Bhandari. Vide his 'Rudra as the Supreme God in the Yajurveda', Nagpur University Journal, XVI, No. 1, 1965, pp. 37-42.

In the AV what is added about Rudra is not new, but only an extention or intensification of his already known traits. In this text he is Sarva, Pasupati, Rudra, Ugra, Bhava and Mahādeva. Together with Soma he is invoked for remission of sins. Bhava and Sarva are together invoked for the expiation of sins and together with Yama and Mrtyu, Rudra is invoked for the same purpose. He has a golden bow and a number of arrows. animal associates have become more numerous and varied. they include cows, horses, goats, sheep, crows dogs, deer, ducks, snakes, vultures, birds, pythons, eagles, and aquatic animals. Two whole hymns are addressed to him as the lord of animals (Paśupati).

In the AV Mahadeva (a name of Rudra) is identified with Ekavrātya whose association with yoga is clearly indicated. Further, in this text Rudra's association with the phallus worship is also quite obvious.2

Rudra in the Brahmanas

The terrific nature of Rudra gained still greater prominence in the age of the Brāhmaņas. In the AB he is spoken of as being the embodiment of all dreaded forms, and as having been created conjointly by all the gods to punish Prajāpati, the creator of the universe, who committed the sin of feeling love towards his own daughter. The AB also indicates that men of that age felt that if the deity was even addressed by the name 'Rudra', he would do something very terrible to the people. The Kaushītaki Brāhmana seeks to explain how the eight names (Rudra, Sarva, Ugra, Aśani, Mahādeva, Īśāna, Bhava and Paśupati) came to be applied to The first four of these are descriptive of his terrific aspect Rudra. and the latter four of the pacific one. The earliest use of the name Siva is found only in the Śvetāśvatara Upa. Keith believes that the two names Mahādeva and Īśāna are of special importance and that a sectarian worship is indicated by them. In the SB also Rudra is conceived of as a really frightful deity. In SB II. 6.26 his hankering after the sacrificer's cattle is alluded to and the sacrificer is

¹See RHAI, I, p. 98 f. for details. Vide, ibid., p. 99 f. for details.

urged to send him away by giving him provisions. The immediately following verses also clearly indicate that in the age of the SB Rudra was regarded as an evil deity who rendered even his worshippers impure. Even the Satarudrīya hymn is regarded by the compilers of the SB as having been composed with the object of appearing the wrath of the terrible Rudra.

The Vedic texts also speak of the plurality of the Rudras. Their number was fixed at eleven in the *Mbh*. and Purāṇas, just as the number of the Ādityas was fixed at twelve and of the Vasus at eight. In the Gītā Kṛṣhṇa describes himself as Śaṅkara among the Rudras (Rudrāṇām Śaṅkaraśchāsmi).

Rudra-Siva in the Upanishads

The rise of a devotional Saiva sect is slightly hinted at in the Satarudrīya of the YV, for the practice of the recitation of a hundred names of the god (some of which allude to his terrific and others to his auspicious form—siva tanu) presumes an attitude of theistic devotion. In the Upanishadic age his supremacy is given a philosophical basis, for in the Śvetāśvatara, which for the first time uses Siva as his proper name, he figures as the Great God, not only superior to other Vedic gods (Maheśvara among all the īśvaras) but also as identical with Brahman, who has no second. In many ways he reminds the Virāṭapurusha of the Purushasūkta of the RV. "For truly, Rudra (the terrible) is the one—they (who know the one) stand not for a second—who rules all the world with his ruling powers." "He. the protector, after creating all beings, merges them together at the end of time. Having an eve on every side and a face on every side, having an arm on every side and a foot on every side, the one god faces together with hands, with wings, creating the heaven and the earth—He who is the source and origin of the gods the ruler of all, Rudra, the great seer, who of old created the Golden Germ (Hiranyagarbha)—may He endow us with clear intellect."²

According to Bhandarkar the religio-philosophic speculations contained in the Śvetāśvatara though essentially Upanishadic, are

¹Śvetāśvatara Upa., III. 2.

^{*}Ibid., III. 3-4.

much nearer to the later Bhakti school than the ideas of any other older Upanishadic text. It stands at the door of the Bhakti school and pours its loving adoration on Rudra-Siva instead of on Vasudeva-Kṛshṇa, as the Gītā did a few centuries later. As we have seen, Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa was a historical figure while in the age in which the Śvetāśvatara was composed Rudra-Śiva, a purely mythological concept, was alone in the field as the Supreme God. The germs of Bhakti which manifested themselves at the time, were therefore directed towards him. The Śvetāśvatara Upa, thus contains the theism of the Upanishadic period in its most mature form with a distinctly personal god at the centre. The attitude of its author is of one-souled devotion (ekātmikā bhakti) and absolute surrender (saraṇamaham prapadye) to Rudra. However, as Bhandarker argues, it should be remembered that though in this work the Supreme Soul has been identified with Rudra. Siva, Isana and Mahesvara, and his powers are spoken of as Isanis, yet there is no indication whatever that these names have been given for the purpose of raising Rudra-Siva to the status of supreme godhead to the exclusion of other gods. Names indicative of Rudra-Siva appear to have been used, since he was invested with a personality perceived and acknowledged by all. This Upanishad, therefore, is not a sectarian treatise like others promulgated in later times, and that is the reason why it is often quoted by Sankarāchārya. Rāmānuja and other writers of different schools, and not by the Saivas only.

The emergence of Rudra-Siva as a sectarian god becomes clearer in the Atharvasiras Upa. of a much later date. In this work Rudra is not only identified with many other deities but is also described as transcending each of them individually and collectively. Reference is also made to his devotees listening to the prescribed texts(sravana), thinking on their real meaning (manana) and undertaking to perform the Pāśupatavrata involving ceremomial touching of the different limbs of the body with ashes. The performance of this vrata is said to result in loosening the bonds (pāśa) of the individual (paśu) leading to his liberation (paśupāśamivochana). Undoubtedly it was the original source on which one of the vidhis of the later Pāśupatas was based.1

¹Banerjea, PTR, p. 70.

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Rudra in the Sütra Literature

Meanwhile the darker side of the nature of Rudra, which became somewhat obscure in the devotionalism of the Upanishads, was not forgotten. A sacrifice called Sūlagava is mentioned in most of the Gṛhyasūtras in which a bull is sacrificed to Rudra to appease him. It is prescribed that the rite should be performed beyond the limits of a village and its remains should not be brought into it. It suggests the inauspicious character of this rite. The inauspicious nature of Rudra is also indicated by the directions given in some of the Gṛhyasūtras to render obeisance to Rudra and pray for safe conduct when traversing a path, coming to a place where four roads meet, crossing a river, getting into ferry-boat, entering a forest, ascending a mountain, passing by a cemetery or by a cow-shed and such other places.¹

Rudra-Śiva in the Rāmāyaņa

The Vedic Rudra underwent a more thorough change in the Epics. The Rāmā.2, being primarily a Vaishņava work and far smaller in comparison to the Mbh., makes fewer references to Rudra-Siva and whatever references are made by it they are not much different from those of the Mbh. discussed below in detail. However, a few points may be noted. In the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$, the transformation of Rudra into Siva is more complete. He is now Sitikantha, Traymbaka, Pasupati, Siva, Sankara and Asutosha. His terrific aspect finds mention only rarely. His philosophical aspect is also not described much but its knowledge is indicated by some of his epithets (e.g. akshara, avvava). His association with yoga, asceticism and bhakti is more explicit. His wife Umā finds respectful mention. The stories of his Vishapana (poison-drinking) at the time of Sagaramanthana, Gangavatarana, his marriage with Parvatī, Madanadahana, the birth of Skanda, the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice, Tripuradahana, Andhakabadha, etc. found in greater detail in the Mbh. are also described or alluded to in the Rāmā. Mention is also made of his

¹Bhandarkar, op. cit.

²For detailed discussion and references vide Yaduvamsī, Saiva Māta, Patna, 1955, pp. 56-66.

ganas and Nandin and of his worship by the danavas such as Ravana and Vidyutkeśa.

Rudra-Śiva in the Mahābhārata

The various aspects of the epic-Pauranika Rudra-Siva concrete formulation in the Mbh.1 Let us discuss his philosophical aspect first. When Arjuna praises Siva for pāsupatāstra, he describes him as a supreme god with the attributes of creator, preserver and destroyer, with a third eye in the forehead, invincible, the destroyer of Daksha's sacrifice, etc. He is so very powerful that Nārāyaṇa could see him only after he had practised penance for thousands of years and when he finally saw him, he sang a hymn to him addressing him as Creator, Preserver and Destroyer, the Alpha and the Omega, the Subtle Abstract Principle, prototype of all creation, past, present and future, the Omnipresent and Ominiscient Being. When Arjuna asked Krshna who the shining figure was who went before him killing enemies even before Arjuna's own weapons touched them, Krshna tells him that it was none other than Sankara also known as Tryambaka (for being the lord of three goddesses), Siva (because he offers sacrifices desiring good of mankind in all spheres), Vyomakeśa (because his hair is nothing but the brilliant splendour of the sun and the moon), Vṛṣhākapi (because Dharma is called the Vṛsha), Hara (because he robs Brahmā, Indra, Varuņa and Kubera), and Rudra (because he is composed of all that consumes, all that is sharp, fierce and powerful in flesh, blood and marrow). The epithets Sulin, Jatila, Sahasrāksha, Nīlakantha, Pinākin, Ambikāpati etc. are also used He is also characterised as fond of dance-offerings (Nātyopahāralubdha) and the patron of music and singing (Gītavāditrapālin), with ten hands (Daśabāhu), with head in his hands (Kapālahasta), fond of ashes of the burning pyre (Chitibhasmapriya), sword-tongued (Khadgajihvā), with a deformed face (Vikratavaktra), with an antelope skin for his upper garment (Kṛshṇājinottarīya), with a stout but decayed body and with matted hair

¹For detailed discussion and references see Yaduvamsī, op. cit., pp. 66-89; Bhattacharji, S., op. cit., pp. 92-118; Ayyar, C.V. Narayana, Origin and Early History of Saivism in South India, Ch. V.

(Sthūlajīrṇajaṭila), with locks shining like a blazing sun and fire (Dīptasūryāgnijaṭila), concealed in the guise of a lunatic (Unmattave-shaprachchhana), the preserver of all creatures (Sarvalokaprajāpati), bull-shaped (Vṛsharūpa) and large-jawed (mahāhanu). In answer to Pārvatī's question he explains the functions of his four faces thus: with the eastern one he performs Indra's task, with the northern he enjoys Umā's company, with the southern, malignant face he destroys all creation while his western face is auspicious to all creatures.¹

One of Śiva's functions in the Epic is to give boons to the supplicants. He gave his Pāśupata weapon to Arjuna and granted the desire of the Kāśī princess to be born as king Drupada's son for killing Bhīshma to avenge herself. The Śakti weapon, which Yudhishṭhira hurled at Śalya, was supposed to have been fashioned by Tvashṭṛ on his behalf. Paraśurāma gained his famous weapon by pleasing the god at mountain Gandhamādana. Kṛshṇa Dvaipāyana pleased Śiva with penance and received Śuka as son.

Of Siva's exploits the most frequently mentioned are his burning of the three cities (Tripuradahana) and his destruction of Daksha's sacrifice. Of Tripuradahana² there are actually three full accounts with some variations and many stray references strewn in the whole of the Epic. Of the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice also we have three distinct accounts. In the longest account when Pārvatī sees the procession of gods moving towards Daksha's sacrifice, Siva explains to her that gods had fore-ordained that he should have no share in the sacrifice. Then, observing her mortification, he rushes towards the sacrifice and utterly destroys it. In another verson he creates Vīrabhadra and Bhadrakālī who at his bidding completely smash the sacrifice.³

Siva is also credited with the killing of the demon Andhaka. Among his more peaceful enterprises may be mentioned his holding of the river Gangā as it descended from the sky at the request of Bhagīratha.

The Vedic Rudra was not an ascetic himself but the epic Siva

¹Agrawala, V.S., 'The Meaning of Mahadeva', *Purana*, VII, No. 2, 1965, pp. 291-99.

²Cf. Ayyar, op. cit., Ch. IV.

⁸Ibid.

He is quite frequently mentioned as engaged in deep meditation.

Siva is not only worshipped in his proper person, he is worshipped as a phallic deity also. He is called Sathāņu because his linga is fixed in erect position. It is said that Siva is unique in that it is only his linga that is worshipped by the gods.

In the Epics Siva is almost everywhere accompanied by Pārvatī while Skanda and Ganesa supplant the Marutas as his sons. In the Epics Pārvatī is also an independent goddess in her own right. In some passages her union with Siva is conceptually carried to the extreme where the couple is described as one figure (Ardhanārī śvara).

Siva's associates in the Epics are still essentially the same as they were in the YV and AV. They have only gained in detail and have become increasingly repugnant. One of the new Epic associations of Siva is that with snakes. It was probably conceived in the Indus Civilization, but becomes explicit now.

The Vedas give a mouse to Siva as his individual animal associate; in the Epic bull is his vāhana. The bull is his close associate as well.

Rudra-Śiva in the Puranas

In the Purāṇas1 (specially the Saura, Matsya, Linga, and Vāyu) the various aspects of the post-Vedic Rudra-Siva concept, which we notice in the two Epics become more explicit and the Epic stories connected with him are related in even greater details. It is here neither necessary and nor desirable to repeat them; we shall therefore recapitulate them only briefly.

In his philosophical aspect Siva of the Puranas is Para Brahma or Parama Purusha. He is the Ultimate Transcendental Immanent Reality. As the same claim was made by the Vaishnavas for Vishnu, the liberal thinkers of the age propounded the identification of the two. Not only this, in several Puranas all the three deities of the Hindu Triad were conceived as the aspects of the same Reality. Alongwith him the philosophical aspect of his wife or Sakti was also developed (cf. Ch. 11).

¹For a detailed study vide Yaduvamsi, Saiva Mata, Ch. 5.

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The popular aspect of Siva in the Purāņas is also similar to that of the Epics. He is Śiva, Śańkara, the husband of Umā-Pārvatī, and father of Gaṇeśa and Kārttikeya. He may easily be pleased with yoga, tapas and bhakti. He is himself a Mahāyogin. He is worshipped in the form of images as well as liṅgas. A large portion of the Śaiva Purāṇas is found devoted to the stories connected with liṅga worship (infra). His ardhanārīśvara form is also described in the Purāṇas. Several vratas, upavāsas and festivals have become associated with his worship including Ananga Trayodaśī and Śiva-Chaturdaśī.

The fierce or ugra form of Siva is not wholly forgotten in the Purāņas. Some of the Purāņas anticipate his worship in the Tāntrika form also.¹

Lines of Development of Rudra into Rudra-Śiva

As we observed in the first volume of the present work, the transformation of the Rgvedic Rudra into the Rudra-Siva concept was not the gradual development of a Vedic deity along the lines laid down in the RV, but the metamorphosis of a minor Aryan god into a composite god which has Aryan, pre-Aryan as well as non-Aryan tribal features.2 With the passage of time he not only grew in stature till from a minor deity he was proclaimed the Supreme Being, but also changed his character fundamentally. The story of his transformation in the Vedic age itself as the result of the influence of the Indus religion, some tribal and mountainous deities and his association with the non-Vedic Vrātyas and the city-dwelling people, has already been discussed by us.3 Here some additional points may be noted. The fact that his wife Parvati is called the daughter of Himālaya added strength to his association with mountains. There may have been a deified hunter also at the back of his concept. The SB records that when other gods attained heaven Rudra was left behind. This, alongwith the episode of the destruction of Daksha's sacrifice, may also be interpreted as a record of the Aryan reluctance to include Siva among their gods. The SBalso tells us that Sarva was a name of Agni among the eastern

¹Bannerjee, P., 'Some Aspects of Early History of Saivism,' *Indo-Asian Culture*, XIV, No. 3, 1965, pp. 216-31. Vide *infra*, Ch. on Tantrikism.

²RHAI, I, p. 26.

^{*}Ibid., p. 20 ff.

people and that the name Bhava was used among the Bāhlīkas. It suggests that several components of the epic-Paurāņika concept of Rudra-Śiva were lent him by different tribal gods of different regions.

Evidence for the Popularity and Early Spead of Śaivism

The evidence for the popularity and spread of Saivism in early period is quite meagre. Pāṇini in his Ashṭādhyāyī refers to several names of Rudra—Bhava, Śarva, Rudra and Mrda. The last one is included as one of the names of Rudra in the Satarudrīya also. The name Siva also occurs in another Pāṇini sūtra (IV. 1. 112) Sivādibhyon which means that the words like 'Saiva' derived by the application of suffix an on words like 'Siva' denote the descendants of them (of Siva etc.). J.N. Banerjea suggests that here 'descendants' should be taken in the sense of 'followers'. Early Buddhist works like Chullavagga and the Samyutta Nikāya, however, mention Śiva as Deva or Devaputra but do not refer to his worshippers explicitly. The famous Niddesa passage, quoted elsewhere in connection with Bhakti and Vaishnavism, refers to Deva and his worshippers but the reference is obviously too dubious to be of some significance. The historions of Alexander's invasion mention a people called the Siboi or Sibae who lived in the Punjab. They are usually identified with the Sibis of the Indian literature. According to Banerjea their name as well as the fact that they wore dress of skin and carried clubs appear to equate them with the worshippers of Siva. Hesychius, a Classical writer, informs that 'bull was the god of India'. He has obviously referred to the bull form of Siva.2

Megasthenes refers to two Indian gods, Heracles and Dionysos. His Dionysos is usually identified with Siva, for he describes him as the god of hills and mountains. But Megasthenes clearly says that the Indians spoke of three individuals by this name appearing in different ages—Indos (apparently Indra), Katapogon (Kapardin?) and Lenaios (Lingin? Langlin? Sankarshana who was a haladhara?). If our suggestion is correct than only Katapogon would be identifiable with Siva, the Kapardin or Jațila.3

Banerjea, PTR, p. 72.

²Ibid., p. 71.

³S. Jaiswal (op. cit., p. 55) identifies Katapogon with Sankarshana and Lenaios with Siva.

In the post-Maurya period Jālauka, a successor of Aśoka, was a Śaiva. According to the Shaddarśanasamuchchaya of Haribhadra Gautama and Kaṇāda, founders respectively of the Nyāya and Vaiśeshika systems were Śaivas. Patañjali in his Mahābhāshya mentions not only Śiva-Bhāgavatas (discussed in the next Chapter) but also refers to Rudra twice as a god who has to be propitiated with animal sacrifice and on two other occasions describes the medicinal herbs of Rudra as auspicious (śiva). He also refers to the god by his proper name Śiva twice, once in connection with his images.

The inscriptional data for early Saivism are very few. But early Indian coins of all varieties—the punchmarked, cast and die struck—represent Siva in all the threee forms—phallic, theriomorphic (as a bull) and anthropomorphic. The three-faced Siva on early Ujjain coins is shown carrying danda and kamandalu. Two-armed Siva is shown with a triśūla on a seal of Sivarakshita, on some coins of Maues and Gondophornes, on a few issues of the Audumbara chief Dharaghosha and on the coins of Wema Kadphises, Kanishka, Huvishka and Vāsudeva. There is probably a reference to a Śaiva shrine (Śivathale=Śivasthale) in a Kharoshṭhī record of the first cent. A.D.¹ The patron deity of the city of Pushkalāvatī was also probably Śiva. The Indo-Parthian ruler Gondophornes was probably a Śaiva. Wema Kadphises, the Kushāṇa ruler, was certainly a devotee of Śiva. He has been explicitly described as a Māheśvara on his copper coins.

Lingopāsanā: its Popularity

It is a well-known fact that from a fairly early period the Saivas in general used to place Sivalinga, the emblem of Siva, as the principal object of their worship in the main garbhagtha of their shrines. The various types of anthropomorphic figures of the god were carved in different parts of the temple more or less as subsidiary figures.

The most important linga mentioned in the epic-Paurānika literature are: Kedāreśvara linga on the Himālaya, the Vaidyanātha at Deogarh, the Viśveśvara linga in Vārānasī, the

¹Banerjea, op. cit., p. 76 f.

Mahākāla linga and the Amarcsvara lingas in and near Ujjain, the Omkāreśvara linga on the Narmadā, the Someśvara linga at Somanatha, the Tryambaka linga near Nasik, the Bhimasankara linga near the source of the Bhīmā in Maharashtra, the Mahābaleśvara linga at Gokarna in Kanara, the Mallikārjuna linga at Śrīsaila and the Rāma linga at Rāmesvaram. The location of Gautameśa linga and Nāgeśa (Dārukavana) is not known.

Antiquity of Lingopāsanā

The antiquity of phallicism in India is now well established. As we have seen, phallacism was prevalent in the Indus Civilization¹ though it is difficult to postulate that the Indus people worshipped the lingas and yonis jointly, as is done today. J.N. Banerjea rightly points out that the 'linga on arghya (or yoni)' emblem was quite late in appearance even in the historical period.2 When the Vedic Aryans settled in North India they faced several hostile tribes. Among them were included the Sisnadevah (the worshippers of phallus). As we have shown elsewhere3 in the Middle Vedic Age there were various other religious and social groups which subscribed to the cult of phallus as a result of which it was increasingly accepted by the Vedic Aryans. The Epics and Purāņas are full of the stories of the high antiquity of the various Sivalingas worshipped in India. For example the Skanda P. records that the Avimuktesvara linga was founded at Vārāņasī during the reign of Divodāsa, a king of the Vedic Age. Similarly the Daksheśvara Śivalinga is said to have been founded by Daksha Prajapati, Naleśvara by king Nala, Rāmeśvara by Rāma of Ayodhyā, and so on. All these late legends can hardly prove the prevalence of linga worship among the Vedic Aryans as Ravindra Kumar Siddhantashastri seems to think.4 However it may be admitted that their testimony supports the conclusion that the Aryans began to accept linga worship within their fold in the post-Vedic period.

The evidence of the Upanishads clarifies the point. The Śvetāśvatara Upa. (IV. 11) speaks of the god Īśāna (Rudra) as

¹RHAI, I, Ch. 2.

²DHI, p. 169.

³RHAI, I, p. 97 ff.

^{&#}x27;Siddhantashastri, R.K., Saivism Through the Ages, Ch. 3.

presiding over every yoni. In V. 2 of the same work the Lord is said to preside over all forms and yonis. According to R. G. Bhandarkar it may be an allusion to the physical fact of linga and yoni being connected together. The mention of the term linga in the Brhaddevatā of Saunaka and the description of a thumb-like form of Rudra in the Svetāśvatara (III. 13; V.8)¹ may also be held as indicative of the gradual acceptance of linga as the emblem of Rudra-Siva.

But for a long time the Aryan were hesitant to accept linga worship fully. Patanjali (2nd cent. B.C.) refers only to the pratikitis of Siva, and not to his linga emblem. The coins of Wema Kadphises (1st cent. A.D.) depict Siva in human form with his trident and mount Nandin, but does not show the linga emblem. However gradually the popularity of linga worship increased as is evident from the following facts:²

- (1) Several coins of different varieties from Taxila and Ujjain dating back to the pre-Christian centuries (3rd-2nd cent. B.C.) contain phallic emblem. The Ujjain coins show Siva in human form with bull on one side and linga with Sthalavrksha on the other.
- (2) An interesting 5' high sculpture of Sivalinga of probably 2nd or first cent. B.C. was discovered by Gopinatha Rao from Gudimallam in North Arcot Dist. It is a beautifully but realistically carved Sivalinga with a well-proportioned two-armed Siva in human form on the surface. The sex mark of the god is prominently shown. The god stands on a dwarf (the Apasmārapurusha of later texts). The practice of showing human Siva on a linga in a single sculpture is found in later periods also.

(3) Many other realistic phalli of 1st to 3rd cent. A.D. from Mathurā and other places are reported by J. N. Banerjea.

(4) The worship of linga is mentioned in the later portions of the Mbh. For example, in the Anuśāsanaparvan Kṛṣhṇa is told by the sage Upamanyu that Mahādeva is the only god whose linga is worshipped by men. In the Vanaparvan Arjuna prepares a sthaṇḍila of Mahādeva, which probably means dais with a Śivalinga.

¹Tāntrika texts also refer to the angushtha form lingas.

²For details vide DHI, p. 455 ff.

(5) The Classical Sanskrit literature is aware of linga worship. It is mentioned by Dandin in his Dasakumāracharita and by Bāna in his Harshacharita.

Epic-Paurānika Stories Regarding the Origin of Lingopāsanā

The Mbh. gives some interesting details regarding the Linga cult. In the Dronaparvan it is said that 'Sthanu is so called because his linga is always standing (erect)'. Further, the expressions Urdhvalinga, Urdhvaretas and Sthiralinga occur in the different portions of the Epic for Siva. The Anusasanaparvan generally depicts the importance of the worship of the linga. The HV also emphatically identifies linga and bhaga with Tryambaka (Śiva) and Uma, and, states that there is no third entity apart from these in the world.1

In the Mbh. Kṛshṇa relates to Yudhishthira the following story about the origin of linga worship: once Brahmā told Śankara not to create. Whereupon Sankara concealed himself under water. When there was no creation a long for Brahmā created another Prajāpati who brought into existence a large number of beings. After some time Mahadeva came out of water, and seeing that new beings had been created and were in a flourishing condition, he cut off his organ of generation as no more necessary, and it stuck into the ground. He then went away to perform penances at the foot of the Mūjavant Mountain.

The Skanda P. narrates that when Siva went for begging alms in a naked fashion to Dāruvana, the wives of rshis fell in love with him. Thereupon the Ishis cursed him that his linga would fall The Saura P. corroborates this account. The Linga P. states that Siva wanted to know and examine the philosophical knowledge attained by the ishis residing at Daruvana, and it was afterwards that the above mentioned events happened. According to the Padma P. once Savitri cursed Siva saying that the rshis would curse him and eventually his linga would fall down. But later on, when appeased, she said that the linga thus fallen shall be worshipped by the whole mankind. The Vāmana P. relates that Siva being grieved at the loss of Satī began to wander into a deep forest, named Daruvana. There the wives of the sages became

¹Karmarkar, A.P., 'The Linga Cult in Ancient India', B.C. Law Volume, I, p. 463.

agitated with the pain of love for him and began to follow him. When the sages saw their holy dwellings thus deserted, they exclaimed, "May the linga of this man fall to the ground." That instant the linga of Siva fell to the ground and the god disappeared. The linga, as it fell, penetrated through the lower worlds, and increased in height, untill its top towered above the heavens. On hearing of this Vishnu descended into the lower regions in order to ascertain its base and Brahmā ascended the heavens for discovering its top. But both were unsuccessfull. Then together they approached and praised the linga and entreated Siva to resume it which he did after getting the promise that gods and men will pay homage to it. According to the Siva P. out of compassion Siva appeared before the two fighting gods in the form of a huge column of blazing fire. This huge column of fire was known as Sivalinga. In the Linga P. this column is called Bhāskaralinga.

Types of Lingas

The lingas are variously divided into natural and man-made categories or chala and achala categories or according to their place of worship (palaces, houses, temples, open spaces etc.). Fach of these are further divided into five kinds—svayambhū, daiva, pālaka, ārsha and mānasa. Svayambhū lingas are of several kinds—Bāṇalingas, Siddhalingas, Narmadālingas, etc. Tradition has it that fourteen crores of Bāṇalingas are found in eight different parts of the world. Besides, it is said that the Gaṇḍakī supplies six varieties of linga stones which are called respectively Śivanābha, Aghora, Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Tatpururusa, and Īśāna, of which the Aghora alone is unfit for worship.

According to the Lakshmi-Nārāyaṇa-Samvāda differen lingas should be worshipped inside and outside the houses. The Brāhmaṇa householders should use lingas made of rock-crystal, Kshatriyas of silver, Vaiśyas of bell-metal, Śūdras of earth and Rākshasas of gold.

As noted above, early lingas were realistic in appearance. In the Gupta and post-Gupta period, realism gives place to conventionalized form. The Karamadāndā linga of the time of Kumāragupta I (c. 455 A.D.) indicates this attempt towards conventionalization. However, on some Bhita seals of this age old realism is also found.

From the Late Kushāna and Gupta periods mukhalinga and lingodbhava images are also found. In the mukhalinga images one

(as is the No. 42 of Lucknow Museum) or four faces of Siva are shown on the Rudra or Pūjābhāga of the linga (Sadyojāta, Vāmadeva, Aghora, and Tatpurusha); the fifth face Iśāna remains invisible. The four faces are carved on four sides of the shaft. On one mukhalinga of Mathura, however, four shafts have one face each and are joined together. J.N. Banerjea reports a dvimukha Sivalinga from the same site.

The lingodbhava images depict the failure of Brahmā and Vishnu to find the top and bottom of the blazing fire of Śivalinga. One of the earliest lingodbhava images is found in the Daśāvatāra cave of Ellora. Such images are also found from Kāñchī, Ambaramangalam, etc.

Idea Underlying the Lingopāsanā

According to J.N. Banerjea and Gopinath Rao the principal idea underlying the worship of Sivalinga was originally phallic. It is proved by the discovery of realistic stone lingas from the Indus sites, by the contempt shown to the Sisnadevas by the Rgvedic Aryans, by the Sivalingas carved as realistic phalli found from Gudimallam and other places and by the late acceptance of the phallic worship in Hinduism.

However, with the process of the acceptance of lingopāsanā by the Aryans, its significance also changed. It is evident even from the changed form of the Sivalingas. As noted above, in the Classical period instead of a realistic phallus it became highly conventionalized; so much so that Havell even suggested that the Sivalinga was modelled on the votive stupas of the Buddhists.

According to some modern scholars Sivalinga and its pītha part (which is called yoni) are jointly the symbols of male and female principles. And it cannot be denied that the Tantrika texts support this interpretation. But J.N. Banerjea believes that originally lingas and yonis were worshipped separately, Firstly, in the Indus religion the ring stones and linga stones appear to have served the purpose of cult objects separately. Secondly, the Gudimallam and other early historical lingas are not found associated with yonis. Thirdly, the so-called yonibhaga of the Sivalinga may be regarded as merely the pranālī or drain for the easy flow of water poured on the linga.

Many scholars¹ do not believe that Śivalinga is the phallic emblem of Śiva. They explain it as a philosophical symbol. They point out that in the Śvetāśvatara the Lord is described as thumb-shaped. It might have been the source of the idea of the phallus like shape of Lord Śiva. The statement that he presides over every yonī merely means that he is the lord of all beings (yonīs or creatures). Hence his name 'paśu (=ātman, yonī) pati'. The legend of Śiva appearing before Brahmā and Vishņu in the form of a fiery column which could not be fathomed by Brahmā and Vishņu also proves that Śivalinga has nothing to do with the phallus worship.

As a symbol of fertility lingas are installed on the Samādhis of saints. Some of the famous centres of the linga worship (Jyotirlingas) are said to have been divine cemeteries originally.

It is quite likely that the linga was originally the phallic emblem of the Surpreme God but in the historical period it had undoubtedly become the symbol of a philosophical concept. Similarly, it is possible that the worship of yoni, the symbol of the Mother Goddess, was not originally associated with the linga worship, but in the later ages both of them were definitely regarded as the joint symbols of male and female principles.

Chapter 10

Sects of Saivism

The Main Saiva Sects

In the Western context the concept of a 'sect' embodies three essential features: a specific doctrine (including a prescribed mode of worship), a priesthood, and a well-defined and exclusive laity.1 But the structure of the Hindu 'sects' in general is much more amorphous than that of the Christian ones. In most cases in Hinduism more emphasis is placed on doctrine (daršana, mata, samava) and mode of worship (vidhi) than on organisation. As regards Saivism several Sanskrit commentators on Brahmasūtra II.2.3 criticise the doctrines and practices of religious sects which preach devotion to Siva and philosophical dualism. Sankarāchārya (788-820 A.D.) mentions only the Mahesvaras who obviously were the same as the Pāsupatas. Vāchaspati Misra and Bhāskarācharya, both belonging to the middle of the ninth century, divide the Māheśvaras into four groups-Śaivas, Pāśupatas, Kāpālikas, and Kārunikasiddhāntins (or Kāthakasiddhāntins or Kārukasiddhāntins). Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja designate Kāruka-, Kārunika-, Kāthakasiddhāntins as Kālāmukhās, Several names for these sects are also found in different sources 2

Śiva-Bhāgavatas

Apart from these four sects of Saivism there were many others, the earliest of them being the Siva-Bhāgavatas mentioned by Patañjali.

¹Lorenzen, David N., The Kāpālikas and Kālāmukhas, Berkeley, 1972, Preface, p. xi.

²Vide table given on pp. 7-10 of Lorenzen's work. Also see Bhandarkar, VSMR, p. 170 f.

While commenting on Pāṇini Śūtra V. 2.76 he discusses the formation of the words āyaḥśūlika and daṇḍājina and explains that a Siva-Bhagavata is an ayahsulika (one with an iron lance) for he seeks to obtain his end by violence which could be achieved by mild and temperate means. He does not comment on the word dandājina, but it is obvious that a club and hyde-garment were also the characteristic feature of the Siva-Bhagavatas. Patañjali also uses the word rabhasa (forceful way) in describing their rituals. Following R.G. Bhandarkar, J.N. Banerjea finds similarities between them and the later Pāśupatas and suggests that the Siva-Bhāgavatas mentioned by Patañjali were pre-Lakuliśa Pāśupatas. He sees Lakulīśa as the 'systematiser' of this earlier Pāśupata order. However, as Lorenzen points out, this theory finds no support in either of the two extant Pāsupata texts—the Pāsupata sūtra with the Pañchārthabhāshya of Kaundinya and the Ganakārikā with the Ratnāṭīkā attributed to Bhāsarvajña which prove that as early as the Gupta period, the time to which Kaundinya is generally assigued, Lakulīśa was regarded as the founder of the Pāśupata sect.2

We ourselves feel that the Siva-Bhāgavatas were no other than the Siboi of the Classical writers, for not only their names Siva and Siboi are identical, but like the Siva-Bhāgavatas the Siboi were also characterized by hyde-dress and clubs. The facts that Patañjali flourished almost in the same period to which the Classical references to the Siboi belong, and that the former refers to an udīchyagrāma (northern village) Sīvapura (which thus could have been the city of the Siboi) make this suggestion stronger.

Pāśupatas: the Problem of the Historicity of Śrīkantha

The earliest references to the Pāśupatas are probably found in the Mbh. At once place the Epic mentions five religious doctrines—Sāmkhya, Yoga, Pāñcharātra, the Vedas, and Pāśupata and says that the last was propounded by Śiva, who is also called Umāpati, Bhūtapati, Śrīkantha and Brahmasuta. It has been suggested by

¹Banerjea, PTR, p. 74 f.; DHI, pp. 448-52; Comp. History of India, II, pp. 396-400.

²Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 175.

R.G. Bhandarkar tentatively and by V.S. Pathak emphatically 2 that a historical person named Śrīkantha was the founder of the Pāśupata order. Bagchi³ has also casually suggested that Lakulīśa was probably the disciple of Śrīkantha. On the other hand, it has been argued⁴ that the Mbh, passage in question clearly refers to god Siva and not to a deified human being and that most of the allusions to Srikantha which Pathak cites in support of his argument seem to denote the god Siva Śrīkantha and only one from the Tantrāloka of Abhinavagupta makes any connection between Śrīkantha and the Pāśupata doctrine.

Lakulīśa

Lakulīśa (with its variants Lakuleśa. Nakulīśa, Lakulīśvara etc.) is generally regarded as the founder of the Pāśupata order. Legends about his birth and priesthood appear mainly in the Vayu and Linga Purāņas, the Kārāvana Māhātmya, and a few early medieval inscriptions. According to the Kārāvana Māhātmya Šiva was born as the son of a Brāhmaņa couple named Viśvarāja and Sudarśanā in the village of Ulkapuri (mod. Avakhal, near Baroda). He performed several superhuman feats as an infant, died when he was only seven months old, was taken by tortoises to the Jaleśvaralinga where he was brought back to life and thereafter went to Kāvāvarohana where he took up his priestly mission. In the Vāyu and Linga Purānas Siva predicts that in the twenty-eighth yuga, when Kṛshṇa would incarnate as Vāsudeva, he will become incarnate as the brahmachārin Lakulin by entering a corpse in a cremation ground at Kāyārohaņa (Vāyu) or Kāyāvatāra (Linga), obviously identical with Kāyāvarohaņa, and that he would have four pupils-Kuśika, Garga, Mitra and Kaurushya - who would resort to the Yoga of Mahesyara and in the end would go to the Rudraloka. The stone inscription of 971 A.D. from the Fklingaji temple near Udaipur⁵ states that in the country of Bhrgukachchha, (modern Bharuch or

¹Bhandarkar, R.G., VSMR, p. 165.

²Pathak, V.S., History of Saiva Cults in Northern India from Inscriptions, Varanasi, 1960, pp. 4-8.

³Bagchi in History of Bengal, ed. by R.C. Majumdar, 1943, p. 405.

Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 174 f.

⁵JBBRAS, XXII, p. 151-65. Cf. Vyas, El, XXX, pp. 8-12; Bühler, El, I, pp. 271-87.

Broach) propitiated by the sage Bhrgu Siva became incarnate as an ascetic holding a club (lakula) at Kāyāvarohaņa. mentions sages Kuśika etc. and others conversant with the Pasupata voga. The Paldi inscription of 1116 A,D., also found near Udaipur. says that when Siva saw the tree of dharma being destroyed by the axe of the Kaliyuga, he descended to earth at Kāyāvarohana in Bhrgukachchha. The Chintra praśasiti2 of Sārangadeva, thirteenth century inscription from Somnath (Gujarat), mentions that Siva came to Lata (South Gujarat) and dwelt at Karohana as Lakulīśa and his four pupils-Kuśika, Gargya, Bhattaraka Kaurusha and Maitreya, also arrived (avateruh) at this place in order to learn the special conduct (charvā) of the Pāsupata vow (vrata). The fourfold lineage ($j\bar{a}ti$) of those ascetics then came into being and adorned all the land girded by the four oceans. The names of the four disciples of Lakulīśa are also given by Rājaśekhara and Gunaratna.

The date of Lakulīśa has been a matter of controversy. Visuddhamuni mentions twenty-eight incarnations of Siva, Lakulīśa being the last. On the other hand Rājaśekhara and Haribhadra mention Siva's eighteen incarnations, Nakulīśa being the first.³ The Paurāņika tradition makes Lakulīśa a contemporary of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa probably to impart him the aura of antiquity or to emphasize that he played the same role in Saivism which Kṛshṇa played in Bhāgavatism.4 Fleet initially identified him with the Kālāmukha priest Lakuliśvara pandita who presided over the Panchalinga temple in Belagave in 1035 A.D., but abandoned this opinion later in the light of the discoveries of D.R. Bhandarkar. 5 R.G. Bhandarkar dated the rise of the Pāśupata system mentioned in the Mbh. and presumably Lakuliśa as well, about a century after the rise of the Pāñcharātra system, i.e. about the second century B.C.⁶ The problem advanced towards solution when in 1931 D.R. Bhandarkar published the Mathurā pillar inscription of Chandragupta II, which records a donation by the Māheśvara teacher Uditāchārya of two lingas named

¹Vyas, EI, XXX, p. 11.

²Bühler, El, I, p. 274; Fleet, JRAS, for 1907, p. 419.

³Sinha, Jadunath, Schools of Śaivism, Calcutta, 1970, p. 81.

⁴Fleet, EI, VI, p. 228.

⁵JRAS, for 1907, p. 420.

Bhandarkar, VSMR, p. 166.

after his teacher, Bhagavat Kapila, and teacher's teacher Bhagavat Upamita. Uditāchārya is described as tenth in descent from Bhagavat Kuśika and fourth in descent from Bhagavat Parāśara. Bhandarkar identified this Kuśika with Kuśika, the disciple of Lakulīśa and, as the inscription is dated 380 A.D., he assigned Lakulīśa to the first half of the second century A.D.1 However, as pointed out by V.S. Pathak, there were at least two Kuśikas among the spiritual descendants of Lakuliśa. Rajaśekhara mentions that seventeen preceptors flourished in this line from Lakulīśa to Rāśikara. This list includes Kuśika I, the disciple of Lakuliśa and Kuśika II who was the tenth tīrtheśa. Pathak is inclined to place Rāsikara, the seventeenth tīrtheśa, in the early fourth century A.D. and hence Uditāchārya, who flourished in 380 A.D., could have been the tenth from Kuśika II. It would mean that Kuśika of the Mathurā record is Kuśika II and Kuśika I, the disciple of Lakulīśa, flourished in about second century B.C.²

The Jatis (Branches) of the Pasupatas

According to the Chintra prasasti four branches or Jatis sprung forth from the four disciples of Lakuliśa. The Jāti of Kuśika has been noted above. Chintra prasasti discloses the existence of the ascetics belonging to the Gargya gotra. As the word gotra has been defined by Abhinavagupta as 'disciples of a teacher,' Gargya gotra would mean the disciples in the line of Garga. The Chintra praśasti mentions Sthānādhipa Kārttikarāśi 'an ornament of Gārgya gotra', Taporāśi, Vālmīkirāśi and his disciple Ganda Tripurāntaka. The Jatis or branches which originated with Kaurusha and Maitreya are not known. R.G. Bhandarkar3 tried to connect Kaurush with Kārukasiddhāntins identified with Kālānanas or Kālāmukhas. V.S. Pathak supports him and points out that an inscription of 1177 describes Kālānanas as adhering to the Lākulāgama samaya and another record gives the history of Kālāmukha ascetics who traced their

¹EI, XXI, p. 1-9. Cf. Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, pp. 99-105. It is true that the words Lakuliśa and Pāśupata do not occur in this record, but the reference to the Mahesvaras and the depiction of a Lakulisa-like figure on the pillar makes it almost certain that Uditāchārya was a Pāśupata.

²Pathak, History of Śaiva Cults, p. 9, n. 3.

Bhandarkar, R.G., op. cit., p. 172.

origin to Lakulīśa.1 Against this Lorenzen argues that phonetically Kāruka is not close to Kaurusha and that the Kālāmukha epigraphs do not mention Kaurusha anywhere.2

Besides these branches an Agamika tradition describes the continuation of the Lakuliśa doctrine through Ananta gotra. Two other gotras, Chāpala and Praṇāma, are also mentioned in inscriptions.3

Pasupata Doctrines

The Pāśupata doctrines are mainly known from the Pāśupatasūtra, Kaundinya's Pañchārthabhāshya on it and Haradata's Ganakārikā and Bhāsarvajna's Ratnatīkā on it. Mādhava's Sarvadarsanasamgraha (c. 1400 A.D.) summarises the Pañchārthabhāshya and the Gaṇakārikā and reproduces portions of the Ratnaţīkā.4

It is claimed by the Pasupatas that the Pasupatasūtra was written by Pasupati in his Lakulīsa incarnation and was taught by him to Kuśika at Ujjayini. These sūtras contain little metaphysical speculation and elaborately deal with the rituals practised by the Pāśupata ascetics. They do not refer to the theory of karman, transmigration, worship of the phallic symbol, and the doctrines Māyā and nirguņa Brahman. They reject the worship ofof gods and sacrifices to them and also the practice of śrāddha (offering of food to the spirits of the departed ancestors). They regard the Brāhmaņas alone as eligible for dīkshā to the Pāśupata spiritual discipline, look upon women and the Śūdras with disrespect, recommend a rigid code of conduct for the ascetics, and stress meditation on the mystic syllable 'Om'.5

Kaundinya divides Pāśupata doctrine into five principal Topics (Pañchārthas): Effect (kārya), Cause (kāraṇa), Union (yoga), Observance (vidhi) and End of Sorrow (duḥkhānta). The Pāśupata theology is contained in these Topics (minus the fourth which is concerned with vidhi). These five Topics are described as the central feature of the Pāsupata (or Māhesvara) doctrine also in the

Pathak, op. cit., p. 10 f.

²Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 182.

⁸Pathak, op. cit., pp. 11-13.

^{&#}x27;Sinha, Jadunath, op. cit., p. 80.

⁵ Ibid.

comments of Śańkarāchārya, Vāchaspati Miśra and Bhāskarāchārya on Brahmasūtra II.2.3.

The first Topic is Effect or Kārya. Effects are vidyā, kāla, and paśu or bound individual souls. Bound souls are produced, favoured, veiled, influenced by time and modified. They are produced, maintained and dissolved in God as stars appear and disappear in the sky. They abide in Him, and He is their abode, seat, or substratum.

The second Topic is Cause or Kāraņa. This is defined simply as God or Iśvara or Śiva. The Pāśupata faith is thoroughly theistic and consequently God is described as the creator, destoryer and supporter of the universe. He is the supreme cause of bound souls, the world, fetters, etc. He has two major aspects-one which is immanent and manifold (sakāla) and the other which is transcendent and formless (nishkāla). Both are characterised by unlimited Power of Knowledge (jñāna-śakti) and Power of Action (krtya-śakti). Speech is incapable of expressing his formless aspect. Kaundinya and the Ratnațīkā also emphasize God's absolute independence (svatantrata). It means that God acts without regard for human karman (karmādinirapeksha). God's will is thus placed over and above even the moral order (dharma).1

The third Topic is Yoga. Yoga is the union of an individual soul (ātman) with God (Iśvara). Patañjali defines yoga as the suppression of mental modes (chittavrttinirodha), withdrawing the mind from all objects. But, according to the Pāśupatas, yoga is the union of a soul with God through trance or complete absorption of the mind in Him.

Vidhi or Observance, the fourth Topic, is an operation which brings about righteousness. It is of two types-primary and secondary. Primary vidhi is conduct or charya which is of two kinds—vows and doors (or means). The vows consist in besmearing the body with ashes and laying down in ashes, upahāra or six definite practices (namely, laughing, dancing, hudukkāra, prostration, and inaudible repetition), muttering (japa) and circumbulation (pradakshinā). The means or doors are krathana (snoring or acting as if asleep when ons is not), spandana (shaking one's limbs as if afflicted by wind-disease), mandana (walking as if crippled), śrngārana

¹Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 190.

(making amorous gestures in the presence of women), avitatkaraṇa (acting as if devoid of judgement), and avitabhāshaṇa (uttering senseless or contradictory words).

Secondary observances are those which are intended to help the charya. These include besmearing the body with ashes after worship, removing the sense of indecency attached to begging and eating the remnant of what others have eaten. Begged food is the best and purest food and mendicancy is the best penance as it generates the highest good. One should beg food of Brahmanas, Kshatriyas, Vaisyas and Sūdras, but not of the deprayed sinners.

The curious custom of courting dishonour by disreputable behaviour is the most distinctive feature of the Pāśupata cult. According to the Pāśupatasūtra and Kaundinya's commentary thereon, the chief rationale for this behaviour is the transfer of good and bad karman and the cultivation of the attitude of detachment from worldly attractions.

Salvation in Pāśupata doctrine is the fifth principal Topic. It is called Duhkhānta or End of Sorrow. It is achieved only by the grace of God. The designation of Salvation as End of Sorrow has a rather negative ring. Bhāskarāchārya claims that the Pāśupatas, Vaiśeshikas, Naiyāyikas and Kāpālikas all hold that End of Sorrow and Moksha are identical. The Ratnaṭīkā distinguishes between two types of End of Sorrow—the Impersonal (anātmaka) and the Personal (sātmaka). In the Impersonal End of Sorrow souls are without attributes and resemble stones. Personal End of Sorrow, however, is a state of perfection (siddhi) characterized by the power of Lordship (aiśvarya) of Maheśvara. The soul does not dissolve or become absorbed in Īśvara or Brahman as in monistic Vedānta, but ramains inseparably tied to God in the state called Rudra-sāyujya in the Sūtras.

Popularity of the Pāśupata Sect

By the time of Harsha (606-646), and probably as early as the Gupta age, Pāśupata temples had come into existence in most parts of India. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang met or heard reports about ash-smeared followers of the outer way, i.e. Paśupata heretics, in the greater part of North India. Two early seventh century inscriptions registering grants to Pāśupata ascetics have been found in the distant South-East Asia. References to Pāśupatas also occur in

Pallava king Mahendravarman's Mattavilāsa and, indirectly, in Varāhamihira's Brhatsamhitā. Sanskrit writers from Bāna onwards mention them frequently, and from about the tenth century inscriptional references become quite numerous. Post-Gupta sculptures of Lakuliśa have been found throughout India, specially in the South.

Here it is necessary to remember that the term Pāśupata was used not only for a particular sect of Saivism, but sometimes also for the Siva-worshippers in general. Yuan Chwang mentions Pasupatas twelve times in his book. But his description does not agree with that of Bana and Bhavabhuti. As pointed out by R.G. Bhandarkar there were 3 classes of Siva-worshippers: (1) ascetics of the various Saiva sects usually grouped under the name of Pāśupata, (2) their lay followers, and (3) ordinary people who had no connection with any particular sect. People like Kālidāsa, Bāņa and Śrī Harsha etc., who adore Śiva in the beginning of their works, could have been the lay followers of any Saiva sect; but most likely they belonged to the third category.

The Kāpālikas

Unfortunately no religious texts of either the Kāpālikas or the Kālāmukhas have survived. They are mainly known from the accounts left by their opponents such as Yāmuna and Rāmānuja, references in other literary texts and the information contained in epigraphic grants to their temples and mathas.

According to Lorenzen¹ it appears likely that the Kāpālikas originated in South India or the Deccan. They existed in most of the Deccan plateau as early as the eighth century. It is only in sources later than the eighth century that their presence in Gujarat, Bundelkhand, the Vindhya hills and other parts of India is indicated.

The date of the foundation of the Kāpālika order is impossible to establish. The earliest occurrence of the word kāpālin (one who bears a skull) is probably that in the Yājñavalkyasmṛti (III. 245). But in this passage kāpālin has the sense only of bearing a skull and does not imply the existence of a sect or order of Kapalins. In the Maitrayaniya Upa. Kapalins are mentioned as those who

¹Lorenzen, op. cit.

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hypocritically wear red (kāshāya) robes and earrings (kundala) and with whom it is improper to associate. But this passage of the text may be of fairly late date. The Prakrit Gāthāsaptaśatī, traditionally ascribed to the first century A.D., contains a verse describing a 'new' female Kāpālikā who incessantly besmears herself with ashes from the funeral pyre of her lover. But the date of the gāthā is uncertain.

The Lalitavistara mentions certain 'fools' who seek purification by smearing their bodies with ashes, wearing red (kāshāya), garments, shaving their heads, and carrying a triple-staff (tridanda), a pot, a skull, and a Khatvānga. This is clearly a reference to the Kāpālikas. Varāhamihira in his Brhatsamhitā refers to the Kāpāla vow and in his Brhajjātaka enumerates seven classes of ascetics including Vṛddhas who are identified by Utpala with the Kāpālikas. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang saw in India different types of ascetics including those who covered themselves with ashes, or made chaplets of bones which they wore as crowns on their heads, or wore skull garlands. In his Harshacharita Bāṇa describes Bhairavāchārya, a dākshiṇātya saint, who performed a Tāntrika ritual appropriate for a Kāpālika. In Daṇḍin's Daśakumāracharita prince Mantragupta meets an evil ascetic in a forest near the cremation ground outside the capital of Kalinga.

The Kāpālikas are mentioned disparagingly in several Purāṇas. The Vāyu, Brahmāṇḍa and Kūrma Purāṇas assert that in the Kaliyuga Kāshāyins, Nirgranthas, Kāpālikas, Veda-sellers, tīrtha-sellers, and other heretics opposed to varṇāśramadharma will arise. The Brahmāṇḍa P. claims that Svayambhū (Śiva) created Pāśupatayoga first and Kāpālayoga last. The Skanda P. prescribes, as part of the worship of the goddess Parameśvarī, the distribution of pots of wine (surāsava) to Kāpālikas and male and female slaves.

Some of the most valuable material about the Kāpālikas appears in the legendary biographies of Sankarāchārya (A.D. 788-820). The story of Sankara's encounter with a treacherous Kāpālika named Ugra-Bhairava appears in Mādhava's Śankara-digvijaya, of his battle with the militant Krakacha of Karnātaka in the works of Mādhava and Ānandagiri and of his debate with

¹For references, see Lorenzen.

the casteless hedonist Unmatta-Bhairava, in the work of Anandagiri and is repeated in similar words by Dhanapatisūri.1

Several inscriptions from the various parts of India mention Kapāleśvara temples. The Nirmand (Himachal Pradesh) copper plate grant of Mahasamanta Maharaja Samudrasena² records the donation of a village to support the worship of Siva in the form of Mihireśvara at a temple dedicated to Kapaleśvara. A king named Sarvavarman is also said to have given land at the former installation of the god Kapāleśvara of this temple. An inscription from a modern temple of Kavalji (Kāpālin) in Kota region of Rajasthan contains an introductory eulogy of Ganeśa Kapālīsvara. (The most famous Kapālesvara temple is located at Mylapore, a suburb of Madras. At one time the Pasupatinatha temple of Nepal was probably associated with the Kapalikas for the undated Chhatreśvara inscription from this temple, belonging to the reign of King Jishnugupta (seventh century A.D.) refers to the Somakhaddukas in the congregation of the Mundasrnkhalika-Pāśupatāchāryas.3

Sculptures of god Kapāleśvara or Kapāla-Bhairava and goddess Kāpālikā or Kapāla-Bhairavī are found in many early medieval temples, particularly in South India.)

The Kāpālikas are usually called Mahāvratadharas, a term also applied for the Kālāmukhas. The Igatpuri copper plate inscription of Pulikeśin II records a grant for the worship of god Kapālesvara and for the maintenance of the Mahāvratins. The best known rite by this name is described in the Jaiminiya Brāhmana and a few other early works. It is highly unlikely, however, that this ritual was resurrected several hundred years after it had almost died out. Another Mahāvrata which may be recalled in this connection is the chief penance prescribed for the removal of the sin of (accidently) killing a Brāhmaņa. It is called Mahāvrata in the Vishnusmṛti. In this vrata the penitent carries a skull on his staff, and this skull is generally identified as the skull of the person slain. According to Lorenzen this Mahavrata was adopted by the

¹ Ibid.

²Fleet, Corpus, III, p. 286f.

²Goyal, S.R., Prāchīna Nepāla kā Rājanītika aura Sāmskṛtika Itihāsa, Varanasi, 1973, p. 173., Cf. Gnoli, Nepalese Inscriptions in Gupta Characters, No. 59; cf. also No. 65.

Kāpālikas because it was the penance for the most heinous of all crimes, the killing of a Brāhmaṇa. They might have reasoned that if they were in reality already guiltless, the performance of this penance would result in an unprecedented accumulation of religious merit and hence of magical powers (siddhis).

In a number of sources the doctrine of the Kāpālikas is called Saumya or Somāsiddhānta. However, none of the sources which refer to Somasiddhānta says much about the term. Several ṭīkās on the *Prabodhachandrodaya* derive the word soma from the compound sa-Umā (with Umā, i.e. Pārvatī). Although this etymology is not historically correct, by the time of Kṛṣhṇamiśra Soma or Someśvara had become a common name for Siva.

The keystone of the Kāpālika faith was bhakti, personal devotion to a personal god usually identified as Siva in his Bhairava incarnation.)

In Ānandagiri's Śankara-vijaya the Kāpālikas are made to proclaim Bhairava to be the creator, preserver and destroyer of the universe and lord of all the gods. The epithet world-creator (jagat-kart) suggests the dualistic distinction between the material and instrumental causes of the universe which the Brahmasūtra commentators attribute to the Kāpālikas and other worshippers of Paśupati.)

In the Śańkara-vijaya of Ānandagiri Bodholbana-nityānanda and his followers also claim that Bhairava has eight major forms: Asitana, Ruru, Chaṇḍa, Krodha, Unmatta, Kāpālin, Bhīshaṇa and Saṁhāra. They identify the first seven of these forms with the gods Vishṇu, Brahmā, Sūrya, Rudra, Indra, Chandra and Yama respectively. The eighth, Saṁhāra-Bhairava, is Bhairva himself. The remaining gods are merely his 'portions'.

The omnipotent deity of the Kāpālikas demands both propitiation and imitation from his devotees. In this respect the Kāpālika faith differs from other theistic religions only in procedure. If their critics are to be believed, the Kāpālikas specialised in human sacrifice. Allusions to Kāpālikas performing human sacrifices, making offerings of human flesh, or doing pūjā with the aid of corpses are found in the Mālatīmādhava, Prabodhachandrodaya and many other works) Śankarāchārya's Kāpālika opponent Krakacha argues: 'If he (Kāpālin Śiva) does not receive worship with liquor and blood-smeared lotuses which are human heads, how can he attain

joy when his body is embraced by the lotus-eyed Uma. . . .?' There is also some evidence to suggest that the Kāpālikas occasionally practised the various forms of self-mutilation such as cutting of flesh from their own bodies for sacrificial oblations. They drank wine and even ate human flesh. In Yasaḥpāla's Moharājaparājaya a Kāpālika says that one obtains Sivasthana by eating human flesh in the skull of a noble man. The lost skull bowl of Mahendravarman's Kāpālin was full of roast meat. Śańkara's opponent Krakacha fills his own skull bowl with sura through his power of meditation. Unmatta-Bhairava, a Kāpālika opponent of Śańkara, proudly declares that his father and grandfather were liquor makers. In the Mattavilāsa Prahasana a Kāpālin similarly advocates wine and women as the road to salvation recommended by Siva, and in the Prabodhachandrodaya a Kāpālika describes wine as the 'remedy against (transmigratory) existence prescribed by Bhairava'.

The Kāpālika in the Chandakausika implies a sexual or at least a sensual conception of moksha when he praises the immortal world where the siddhas frolic on the peaks of Meru. In Rāmānuja's Śrībhāshya, the Kāpālas declare that he who meditates on the Self as seated in the female vulva attains nirvana. This statement may reflect a partial sublimation of overt sexual ritual. Their addiction to meat and wine, as well as sex, should be associated with the five 'Ma' sounds (pañchamakaras) of the Tantrika tradition.

Most Tantrika sects were well-infused with the doctrines and practices of Hathayoga, and it is unlikely that the Kāpālikas were an exception. References to the magical powers of the ascetics appear in the Kathāsaritsāgara stories of Kāpālika Madanamanjari, Chandrasvamin, Devadatta, and the Kapalika spy.) In Jambhaladatta's Vetālapañchavimsati the Kāpālika mutters a great incantation (mahāmontra) in order to obtain siddhi. The Kāpālin-Pāśupata Aśvapāda in Kalhaņa's Rājataranginī displays the ability to remember his past lives and magically transport his disciple to Kashmir. Krshnamiśra's Prabodhachandrodaya and Bhayabhūt's Mālatīmādhaya also contain allusions to the siddhis of the Kāpālikas.

The aim of a Kāpālika's religious endeavours is, thus, not simply the attainment of a state of divine bliss. On a more worldly level, he seeks magical yogic powers (sidhhis) such as (1) animā, the power of becoming small; (2) laghimā, the power of levitation;

(3) garimā, the power of becoming heavy; (4) mahimā, the power of becoming limitlessly large; (5) Īśitva, control over body and mind; (6) prākāmya, irresistible will; (7) vaśitva, control over the five elements; and (8) Kāmāvasāyitva, fulfilment of desires. Similar lists are found in the Yogabhāshya of Vyāsa, the Tāntrika Prapañchasāra, and other works.

The Kālāmukhas

The Kālāmukha ascetics inhabited mainly the Karnāṭaka region during the eleventh, twelfth and early thirteenth centuries. The name Kālāmukha, sometimes spelt as Kālamukha, may refer to their practice of marking their foreheads with a black streak. Apart from the remarks of Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja the sources for the Kālāmukhas are nearly all epigraphic ones. Judging from the large number of epigraphs recording donations to Kālāmukha temples and maṭhas, these ascetics must have wielded considerable influence in the Karnāṭaka region. They also served as the rājagurus of the Chālukya kings.¹

The Southern inscriptions reveal the existence of at least two major divisions of the Kālāmukha order—the Śaktiparishad and the Simhaparishad. The number of extant Śaktiparishad epigraphs is much greater and they have been found at a larger number of sites. Four separate subdivisions of the Śaktiparishad are distinguished, and it may be assumed that some others also existed whose names have not survived. The most prominent division was centred in the Kedāreśvara temple at Belagave in Shimoga District. The form of Śiva who presided over the Belagave temple was Dakshina-Kedāreśvara.

According to Rāmānuja the Kālāmukhas held the following as the means for attaining desires concerning this world and the next: eating food in a skull, besmearing the body with the ashes of a dead body, eating the ashes, holding a club, keeping a pot of wine and worshipping the gods as seated therein.

No religious text of the Kālāmukhas is extant, and the religious information contained in the inscriptions tends to discredit rather than corroborate Yāmunāchārya and Rāmānuja on the doctrines of the Kālāmukhas. More importantly, the records

Pathak, V.S., History of Saiva Cults in Northern India, pp. 46-50.

indicate that the Kālāmukhas were an offshoot of the Pāśupatas: (1) Both these sects revered the legendary teacher Lakulīśa. (2) The ascetics of both adopted similar or identical names and undertook pilgrimages to Kedāranātha and Śrīparvata. (3) The philosophical content of the Īśvara-kartṛ-vāda propounded by the Kālāmukha munīśvara Bonteyamuni of Hombal is little different from the Pāśupata doctrine of Īśvara as Cause (kāraṇa) of the material universe (kārya). (4) Inscriptions at Nesargi and Sirasangi seem to equate Kālāmukha, Mahāvratin and Mahāpāśupata. (5) Lākulasid-dhānta, the Doctrine of Lākula, was one of the chief subjects studied at the Koḍiya-maṭha of the Kālāmukhas.

Several interesting similarities are found also between the Somnath Pāśupatas and the Southern Kālāmukhas. The Chintra prasasti of 1287 A.D. records the consecration of five linga temples in Somnath; and the Panchalinga temple in Belagave in South belonged to the Kālāmukhas. The five lingas at Somnath were consecrated by a priest named Tripurantaka; and one of the Kālāmukha temples in Belagave was dedicated to the god preceptor Tripurāntaka's Somnath The Tripurāntaka. Vālmīkirāśi; this name is also found among the early priests of the Mūvara-koņeya-santati of the Southern Kālāmukhas. The Somnath record describes a pilgrimage undertaken by Tripurantaka during which he visited two sites with important Kālāmukha associations— Kedāra in the Himālayas and Śrīparvata in Kurnool District. These similarities show that the Pāśupatas and Kālāmukhas continued to share a large body of common traditions in addition to having a common base in the teachings of Lakulīśa.

The second of the two known parishads of the Kālāmukhas is the Simhaparishad or Lion Assembly. Grants to temples of this Parishad have been found in the Guntur, Bellary, Bijapur and Gulbarga Districts. But this group was less influential than the Saktiparishad, or at least received less royal and official support.

In addition to the records left by the Sakti- and Simha-parishads, there are a large number of Kālāmukha epigraphs which cannot with certainty be said to belong to either organization. These epigraphs are approximately contemporary with and are spread over approximately the same regions as those of the two known parishads.

It is fairly certain that most, if not all, Kālāmukha priests

claimed Brāhmaņa status. This we gather from a 1113 A.D. inscription which calls Someśvara of Belagave a Sārasvata, from a few scattered references to the gotras of the Kālāmukha priests, and from the common ending to many of their names—paṇḍitadeva.

The Vîrasaiva or Lingāyata Sect

The early history of the Vīraśaivas or the Lingāyatas is buried in a maze of legends. The principal early leader of the sect was Basava (Sanskrit Vrshabha=bull). The chief Vīrasaiva sources for his lifehistory are two Kannada works—the Basava Purāņa, written in about 1370 A.D., and the Channa-Basava Purāna, written in about 1585 A.D. The Basaya P. avers that Basaya was the son of a Brāhmaņa named Mādirāja and his wife Mādalāmbikā of Bagevadi (in Bijapur District). Mādirāja belonged to the Ārādhya sect. Basava's life was the life of political activities. He was married to the daughter of Baladeva, the chief minister of Bijjala, the Kalachuri king of Kalyāņa (1145-67 A.D.) and gave his own sister in marriage to the king. He was appointed in Baladeva's place after the latter's death. After Basava's appointment, he and his Channa-Basava began to popularize the Vīraśaiya doctrines and won a great number of adherents. In the process they rapidly depleted Bijjala's treasury with liberal gifts to the jangamas, the Vīraśaiva priests. This alienated the king who tried to punish Basava. But before he could do so Basava fled. The king set out to capture him, but Basava defeated the king in battle. The king then reinstated Basava to his old position but there could be no true reconcilement. After some time Basava caused the king to be assassinated and himself went to the shrine of Sangamesvara at the confluence of the Malaprabha and Krishna rivers and was absorbed into the godhead.

The Bijjalarāyacharita, a Jaina work, gives an account of Basava and his relations with Bijjala from the Jaina point of view and mentions Basava's sister as having been given to the king as a mistress. It also claims that after the regicide the murdered king's son chased Basava to Ulavi on the Malabar coast where the former minister ignominiously committed suicide by throwing himself into a well. Basava's nephew Channa-Basava was later reconciled with the new king and became the sole leader of the Vīrašaivas. However the essential facts in the

two accounts are almost similar and may, therefore, be accepted.

As both these sources are relatively late, J.F. Fleet thought it better to ignore them. But as pointed out by K.A.N. Sastri a genealogy contained in the Arjunawada inscriptions of Yādava Kannara (1260 A.D.) mentions Basava or Saṅgana-Basava as the younger son of Mādirāja described as 'tardavāḍi madhyagrāma-Bāgavāḍi-puravarādhīśvara'.¹ These two persons, Sastri rightly believes, must be the famous Vīraśaiva and his father.

From the Basava P. it does not appear that Basava was the founder of the Lingayata sect. Firstly, he was obviously a scheming politician? and could hardly have been the propounder of a new sect. Secondly, in many Lingayata works his name is not mentioned as that of a teacher. Thirdly, it is repeatedly assumed that Vīrasaivism existed before him. According to Fleet the founder of the Lingāyata sect was Ekāntada Rāmayya. His account is also given in the Second Part of the Basava P. This work and an inscription of about 1200 A.D.,3 found at Ablur reveal that he was hostile to Jainism. A contest was held in the town between him and the Jainas. He vanquished them by offering his own head to Siva, who restored it as good as new after seven days. The Jainas, who had promised to accept Saivism if such a miracle happened, refused to do so even after their defeat. Ekantada Ramayya then destroyed their shrine and built a large temple of Vīraśaivism in its place. The Jainas appealed to Bijjala for retribution but declined his offer for a second contest with bigger stakes. Bijjala therefore dismissed their appeal and bestowed on Ekantada Ramayya, in the public assembly, a javapatra or 'certificate of success'. The Basava P. represents Basava himself to have been present when Rāmayya laid this wager. So that beyond undermining the Jaina sect there is no evidence of Rāmayya's having built up the Vīrasaiva creed.

According to Lorenzen, cordial relations existed between the Virasaivas and the Kālāmukhas before Basava. He points out that

¹Quoted by Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 169.

²Some religious sayings (vachanas) of Basava are, however, popular. Vide Marulasiddaiah, G., 'Basava the Saint Ruler of Karnataka (Mysore)', Professor Suryakumar Bhuyan Commemoration Volume, Gauhati, 1966, pps 232-37.

Fleet, EI, V, no. E.

Lorenzen, op. cit., p. 169 ff.

according to an Ablur inscription Ekāntada Rāmayya delivered a sermon in the Brahmeśvara temple at Ablur which was headed by the Kālāmukha priests of the Mūvara-koneya-santati until at least 1144 A.D., and there is no reason to assume that it was not still in their hands when Ekāntada Rāmayya visited it a few years later. It is even conceivable that at the time of delivering his sermon Ekāntada himself was a member of the Kālāmukha sect. Secondly, many other former Kālāmukha temples are now controlled by the Vīraśaivas including the Kedāreśvara temple in Belagave, the Trikūteśvara temple at Gadag (Dharwar District), and the Kālāmukha temples at Huli (Belgaum District). The Brahmeśvara temple also is now known as the temple of Basaveśvara and is a Vīraśaiva shrine. Thirdly, the priests of the Vīraśaivas are called jangamas, a term they explain as 'lingas in movement'. In a number of inscriptions the same word is applied to the Kālāmukha priests.

According to R.G. Bhandarkar, however, the Vīraśaiva sect originated out of the Aradhya sect which existed even in the days of Sankara who, according to Anandagiri, came into conflict with it.1 The Lingayata reform was carried out within its limits, and a portion of the Ārādhya sect adopted the new creed and developed it, while another remained orthodox and staunch to some of the Brāhmanical practices. Firstly, in the beginning of the Basava P. Nārada goes to Siva and tells him that on earth there were devotees of Vishņu, Vaidikas, Jainas and Bauddhas but there were no devotees of Siva himself. He mentions Viśveśvarārādhya, Paņditārādhya, Ekorāma, the great Yogin, and others as having flourished from time to time to establish Sivabhakti, but laments that there is no one now. Siva, thereupon, asks Nandin to become incarnate on earth for the promotion of his religion. In the list of the Saiva āchārvas, whom Nārada mentions, some obviously belonged to the Ārādhva sect. Secondly, in connection with Dīkshās or initiatory ceremonies of Lingayatas it is necesary to place four metallic vessels full of water at the four cardinal points and one in the middle. This last belongs to the person to be consecrated as Guru who is supposed to represent an old Acharya or teacher of the name

¹Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 192 ff., 199, n. 1. S.C. Nandimath supports Bhandarkar (A Handbook of Viraśaivism, Delhi, 1979, p. 8ff.) and also the view that the Vīraśaivas slowly absorbed several elements and mathas of the Kālāmukhas, (ibid., p. 5f).

of Viśveśvārādhya, and the other four to the four other priests chosen as having been brought up in the schools of Revanasiddha, Marulasiddha, Ekorāma and Paņditārādhya, and connected with certain mathas. Of these five teachers some are Ārādhyas and three at least are mentioned in the Basava P. as having preceded Basava (supra).

According to the Virasaivas the One Highest Brahman, characterised by existence (Sat), intelligence (Chit), and joy (Ananda), is the essence of Siva (Sivatattva) and is called Sthala. Several explanations as to why it is called Sthala are given, two of which are based upon artificial etymology. "By the agitation of its innate power (Sakti), that Sthala becomes divided into two: (1) Lingasthala (2) Angasthala. Lingasthala is Siva or Rudra and is to be worshipped or adored, while the Angasthala is the individual soul, the worshipper or adorer. In the same manner the Sakti or power divides herself into two by her own will, one of the parts resorting to Siva and being called Kala, and the other resorting to the individual soul and being called Bhakti, or devotion The Sakti or power makes one an object of worship, while Bhakti makes one a worshipper; therefore, the former exists in the Linga or Siva, and the latter in the Anga or invidual soul. Eventually, by this Bhakti, there is a union between the soul and Siva." "The Linga is Siva himself, and not a mere external emblem of him".

The Virasaiva belief that the original essence of Siva divides itself by its own innate power into Linga (God) and Anga (individual soul) and also becomes the creator of the world, resembles that of Rāmānuja. The Lingāyata school, therefore, is a school of Visishtadvaita (qualified spiritual monism). Further, the method of redemption taught by this school is that of Bhakti and a path of moral and spiritual discipline up to the attainment of sāmarasya with Siva. In this respect also it resembles the philosophy of Rāmānuja.² Śrīkanthāchārya, a Śaiva commentator of the Brahmasūtra, held the same view.3

According to some scholars4 the Vīraśaivas do not believe in ¹Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 192 f. Cf. Kumaraswamiji, 'Vīraśaivism', CHI, IV, p. 98 f.

Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 195.

3 Ibid., p. 195 f.

For social outlook of the Lingayatas vide McCormack, 'Lingayat as a Sect', Journal of Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland, No. 93, Part i, London, 1963, pp. 59-71; also Sahasrabudha, M.V., 'Mahātmā Basaveśyara—A Social Reformer', PIHC, 1979, pp. 221-26'

the caste system. For this they quote a verse from Virasaivasamvardhini which says that there is no caste system among the Vīrasaivas (na tatra jātibhedo). But elsewhere the same work quotes the Śańkarasamhitā to prove that caste system was prescribed by Siva himself (Sivoktam jātimaryadām) and that who does not believe in it is a pāshanda and pāpishtha.1

The Lingavatas abstain from meat and drink. Whether their widows are allowed to marry or not is a debatable point. R.G. Bhandarkar says that they allow their widows to remarry while according to R.K. Siddhantashastree they are expected to pass their lives in the worship of their Lord.² The Lingavata women are not considered polluted during the days of monthly sickness, as is the case among Brahmanical Hindus.

There is a Diksha ceremony among the Vīrasaivas corresponding to the Upanayana among the Brāhmanas. Instead of the Gayatri mantra of the latter, they have the Mantra 'Om namas' Sivaya' and have to wear the Linga or emblem of Siva, in the place of Yajñopavīta. This is called the Lingasvāyattadīkshā. This ceremony is performed in the case of girls also. According to Vīraśaivasadāchārasamgraha the Vīraśaivas should perform all the In their daily ceremonies they recite the samskāras also. Siva-Gāyatrī, the first two lines of which are the same as the Brāhmanical Gāyatrī, and the last is 'Tannah Śivah prachodayāt'.

The worship of the Linga, called Ishta-Linga, worn on the body, (which is regarded as necessary for their women also), is their chief worship. Attendance at temples and worship of the Linga therein are not regarded necessary.

Kaśmīra Śaivism

Kaśmīra Śaivism is so called because the philosophers who enriched its literature belonged to Kashmir. Philosophically it is called Trika Śāstra, Trika Śāsana or simply Trika, probably either because it accepts the three out of ninety two agamas (Siddha, Nāmaka and Mālinī) as more important, or because it recognises the triad Siva, Sakti and Anu, or because it explains three modes

¹Siddhantashastree, R.K., op. cit., p. 154.

^{*}Ibid., p. 155.

of the knowledge of Reality namely abheda, bhedabheda and bheda.1 According to the Trika philosophy Sastra does not mean a book; it means eternal, self-existent wisdom. The Agamas or Sastras exist eternally as para vak. Therefore the wisdom set forth in Trika philosophy is originally the self-knowledge of Reality.2 The Reality is variously designated as Chit, Chaitanya, Siva, Paramasiva and Atman. It is both transcendent and immanent. As transcendent it is described as Siva, as immanent as Sakti. Siva and Sakti are the two conceptual aspects of the same Reality. Sakti is the hrdaya, the sāra, of Siva. Without Sakti Siva is, as it were, śava, a fire without its burning power. The Trika philosophy does not give independent reality to Prakrti as the Sāmkhya does and at the same time it does not reduce the universe to a mere illusion as is done by the Advaita Vedanta.

R.G. Bhandarkar and others usually divide Kaśmīra Śaivism into two branches, the Spandaśāstra and the Pratyabhijñāśāstra. The latter was summarized by Madhava in his Sarvadarśanasamgraha. The authorship of the Spandasastra is attributed to Vasugupta and his pupil Kallata. The two principal works of the system are the Śivasūtram or Śivasūtrānī and the Spandakārikā which is in fiftyone verses only. The first are said to have been revealed to Vasugupta by Siva himself or by a Siddha. As to the second work, there are also varying traditions, one ascribing the authorship of the verses to Vasugupta and another to Kallata. Kallata lived in the reign of Avantivarman (854 A.D.) wherefore his guru Vasugupta's literary activities must be referred to the beginning of the ninth century. The Sivasūtrāņi and Spandakārikā together are called Spandasarvasva. Several others works on Spandaśāstra are known.

Somananda is generally regarded as the founder of the Pratyabhijñā school and the work written by him is called Śivadṛshṭi. But the principal treatises of the school are the sūtras of Udayākara and the glosses and detailed explanations written on them by Abhinavagupta (Pratyabhijñāyimarśinī, Pratyabhijñāvivṛtivimarśiṇī, etc)., the pupil of Somānanda.

¹Basu, Arbinda, 'Kashmir Śaivism', in CHI, IV, pp. 79-97.

² Ibid., p. 82.

Bhandarkar, R.G., VSMS, p. 184.

Abhinavagupta wrote between 993 and 1015 A.D., wherefore Somānanda must be placed in first-second quarter of the tenth century.

Kshemarāja (c. 1000 A.D.), a pupil of Abhinavagupta also wrote an important work *Pratyabhijñahrdaya*. Several other works

on this philosophy are known.

Kaśmīra Šaivism is thus usually divided into two schools, Spandaśāstra and Pratyabhijñā. However Ravindra Kumar Siddhantashastree¹ has tried to prove that long before these two schools Trayambaka school of Śaivism flourished in Kashmir and that Kaśmīra Śaivism therefore has three branches—Trayambaka, Spanda and Pratyabhijñā. The Śivadṛshṭi of Somānanda belongs to the first, the Spandasūtras and the Spandakārikās to the second, and the Śivasūtras, the Pratyabhijñāhṛdaya of Kshemarāja and such other works to the third. In his introduction to the Śivadṛshṭi Pandit Madhusudana Kaula Sastri also describes Somānanda as the follower of the Trayambaka school of Śaivism.²

The two schools of Kaśmira Śaivism apparently cut themselves off from the old traditional Saivism which gradually degenerated into ghastly practices of the Kāpālikas and the Kalamukhas. Hence the epithet Pasupata or Lakula cannot be applied to them, though some of the sober elements of traditional Saivism were preserved in them. The followers of the Spanda school "deny the necessity of God's having a prompting cause such as Karman or a material cause like the Pradhana for the creation of the world. Neither do they admit that he is himself the material cause, as the Vedāntasūtras maintain, nor do they think that some principle of illusion, such as Māyā, generates appearances which are false".3 God is according to them independent and creates merely by the force of his will all that comes into existence, as a yogin creates objects by his mere will without any materials. "He makes the world appear in himself, as if it were distinct from himself, though not so really, as houses or even towns appear in a mirror, and is as unaffected by it as the mirror is by the images reflected in it. Neither does he exist only

¹Siddhantashastree, R.K., Saivism Through the Ages, Ch. 8.

²Ibid., p. 129.

Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 184.

as realised in the world, which is the conclusion that follows from the doctrine that he is the material cause".1

In the Spandaśāstra individual soul is identical with the supreme soul, but the former does not perceive this identity on account of his impurity. "The impurity vanishes when by means of intense contemplation the vision of the highest being breaks in upon the mind of the devotee and absorbs all finite thought. When this condition becomes stable, the individual soul is free and becomes the supreme soul".²

There is great similarity between Pratyabhijñā Śaivism and Śākta monism, the former laying stress on Siva and the latter on Sakti, though they are inseparable from each other according to both. Somānanda declares: "Šiva is never devoid of Šakti or divine power, and Sakti or divine power can never exist apart from Siva. Siva is endowed with divine power, and desires to create entities by His volition. Saivism does not recognise difference between the Lord and His divine power". Somananda describes the five powers of Siva-power of consciousness (chit). power of bliss (ānanda), power of volition (ichchhā), power of knowledge ($i\tilde{n}\tilde{a}na$) and power of action ($kriv\bar{a}$). The last three powers exist in a very subtle state in Him, as non-different from Him. Kshemarāja defines Šivatattva as Parama Šiva of the nature of volition, knowledge and action and full of perfect delight. Sivatattya is the first vibration of Parama Siva in His volition to create the universe.4

The Pratyabhijñā school may be best understood if we compare it with the Advaitism of Śańkara and Dualistic Śaivism of Śrīpati Paṇḍit and Śrīkaṇṭha. Somānanda differs from Śaṅkara on the following points: Śaṅkara regards Brahman as the ontological reality while according [to Somānanda ontological reality is Śiva endowed with divine power (Śakti), Śiva and Śakti being inseparable from each other. Śaṅkara regards God (Īśvara), the phenomenal appearance of Brahman limited by nescience (avidyā), as the omniscient and omnipotent creator,

¹*Ibid.*, p. 184 f.

²Ibid., p. 186.

³Sinha, Jadunath. Schools of Saivism, p. 4.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 4, 8.

sustainer and destroyer of the world, while according to Somananda Siva is the omniscient and omnipotent creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world: He is not a phenomenal appearance. Śankara māyā is neither real, nor unreal, nor both, but indefinable. while for Somananda, māyā is a real power of Siva. For Sankara. the world is a false appearance (vivarta) of Brahman due to maya, while for Somananda the world is real, created by Siva by His power of volition and by His power of action though without the help of any extraneous material. Śankara advocates absolute idealism while Somananda advocates absolute ideal-realism or voluntarism (svātantryavāda). According to Śańkara the individual soul is an unreal appearance, a reflection of Brahman in avidya, while for Somananda the Jiva is real. Siva limits Himself by His māyāśakti and becomes the Jīva. Consequently while for Sankara the soul's bondage is due to its ignorance of its identity with Brahman, and its moksha is due to the destruction of this avidyā, for Somānanda bondage is due to the impurities and avidyā and moksha is obtained by their destruction.1

Pratyabhijñā Śaivism and Dualistic Śaivism both accept Śiva as the supreme, independent reality, and the world also as real. Both accept thirty-six categories (tattvas) and three impurities as real. "But the former is monistic while the latter is dualistic. The former regards Śiva as the ontological reality of the soul and the world, while the latter regards them as eternally distinct from Him. The Pāśupatas regard Śiva as the efficient cause and Prakṛti as the material cause of the world while Pratyabhijñā Śaivism regards Śiva as the efficient, material, and auxiliary cause of the world. Śrīkanṭha's Śaivism and Śrīpati Paṇḍita's Vīraśaivism were influenced by Rāmānuja's qualified monism (Viśishṭādvaitavāda). Their views represent Śaiva Viśishṭādvaita. There are other differences also."²

¹*Ibid.*, p. 73 f. ²*Ibid.*, p. 75.

Saktism (i)

Origin and Antiquity of the Worship of Mother Principle

The worshippers of mother-goddesses conceive their deity as the personification of the primordial energy and the source of all divine as well as cosmic evolution. The term 'Sakti' represents female divinity in general and energising power of some divinity in particular. Such a conception of the Mother-Goddess could originate only in a female-dominated society.²

It is held by scholars like Gordon Childe that most of the advances in the Neolithic 'civilization' such as invention of agriculture, pottery-making and domestication of animals were made by women. It was therefore natural that the mother, the most important aspect of womanhood, was compared with the Mother Earth in view of her possessing similar power of procreation. According to Starbuck "clan life in which the mother is the head of the group is likely to lift the Mother Goddess into a supreme position".3

"Besides this obvious empirical consideration, the speculative aspects also came to play, and the power of creation, preservation and destruction by gods was represented or conceived as the feminine principle, Śākti. It is this Śakti which makes God active and effective. This power in Indian and also in other societies was conceived as female."

¹Kumar, Pushpendra, Śakti Cult in Ancient India, Varanasi, 1974, p. 1.

²Bhattacharya, N.N., 'Śāktism and Mother-Right', The Śakti Cult and Tārā, (SCT), ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1967, pp. 65-73. For the various views on the origin of Śāktism cf. Pushpendra Kumar, op. cit., pp. 3-4.

BERE.

'Sinha, B.P., 'Evolution of Sakti Worship', SCT, pp. 45-55. Cf. Frazer, J.G., The Golden Bough (ab.), pp. 11-82; Briffault, R., The Mothers, 3 vols., London, 1952, III, p. 48 ff.; Bhattacharya, N.N., The Indian Mother Goddess, (IMG), New Delhi, 1977, Ch. I.

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Though it is very difficult to say as to where the worship of the Mother Goddess originated, yet one may readily agree with Marshall that between the Indus and the Nile, the cult of the Mother Goddess was widely prevalent even in the prehistoric age. The evidence coming from the dim past, such as the so-called Venus of Willendorf, Menten, Lespungue and Lausell from Europe. have been traced to the Aurignacian period of the Stone Age.1 Mallowan is, therefore, obviously right when he says that fertility cults related with the Mother Goddess must be the oldest and longest surviving ingredients of the religions of the ancient world.2 According to Briffault also definite economic power was first placed in the hands of men by the domestication of animals, but where agriculture had developed on an important scale without any intervening pastoral stage, the matriarchal order became accentuated. That is why the identification of earth with woman pervades the thought of all stages of culture.3

Origin of Goddess Worship in India

India is the land par excellence of Saktism. The mother-principle, at first an abstraction creating an image in the sub-conscious, projected itself as a visual image emphasizing fertility in many ancient civilizations, but in India this idea touched and influenced almost all religions and sects, apart from its development in the form of a powerful independent sect. Whether its origin was Vedic and Aryan or non-Vedic and pre-Aryan has been a hotly debated question. Marshall suggests that, like the Mother Goddess of Western Asia, the pre-Aryan cult of the Indian Mother Goddess originated in a matriarchal stage of society. His interpretation was inspired by R.P. Chanda who held that Saktism arose in India under the same social conditions as those in which Astarte was conceived in Syria, Cybele in Asia Minor and Isis in Egypt,—that is in a society where mother right or mother-kin was current. In this

¹Goyal, S.R., Viśva ki Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen, p. 14.

²Bhattacharya, IMG, p. 6.

²In ancient India also at the marriage ceremony the woman was called 'a seed field'. The word *kshetra* applies to women in all cases. Cf. Sinha, B.C., *Hinduism and Symbol Worship*, Delhi, 1983, pp. 123-24.

⁴Marshall, J., MIC, I, London, 1931, p. 51.

Chanda, R.P., Indo-Aryan Races, 1916, p. 150 ff.

connection Chanda points out to the survival of the custom of marrying the daughter of the maternal uncle in some parts of South India, to the reference to such a custom in the Baudhayana Dharmasūtra and the Tantravārttika of Kumārila and to the Mahābhārata wherein it is stated that among the Arattas and Vāhīkas nephews inherit the property, instead of sons. According to the Ambattha Sutta and the Mahāvastu also, the Śākyas used to marry their sisters. In the Dasaratha Jātaka, Sītā is represented as the sister as well as the wife of Rāma. In the conversation between Pandu and Kunti we are informed that in earlier times women did not adhere to their husbands faithfully, and yet they were not considered sinful, for that was the sanctioned usage of the times. It was Svetaketu, son of Uddālaka, who introduced the custom of patrilocal marriages.1 It is but natural to expect that these matriarchal social groups attached special importance to the cult of the Mother Goddess.

Some light on this problem is thrown by a study of philosophical and religious ideas also. The Samkhya philosophy identifies Purusha and Prakṛti respectively with the male and female principles, men and women. Just as the offspring is produced by the union of man and woman, so also this universe is produced by the union of Purusha and Prakṛti. But the same Śāmkhya holds that Purusha is subordinate and nothing but a passive spectator; Prakṛti is all in all. In the Tantras also women are given the right of initiating persons as preceptresses in the matter of religious and spritual activities. According to Bhattacharya the conception of Dakshiņāchāra, as opposed to Vāmāchāra, may be a latter development, and it is possible that the first word in the expression vāmāchāra is not vāma or left but vāmā or a woman.2 R.G. Bhandarkar points out that the ambition of every pious follower of the Śakta system is "to become identical with Tripurasundarī, and one of his religious exercises is "to habituate himself to think that he is a woman. Thus the followers of the Sakti school justify their appellation by the belief that god is a woman, and it ought to be the aim of all to become a woman". In the Devībhāgavata P. it is

¹Mbh., Ādiparvan, 122.

²Bhattacharya, SCT, p. 71.

Bhandarkar, R.G., VSMR, Poona, 1933, p. 208.

stated that Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva were transformed into woman before they could see the Devī in her highest form. According to the Tantras, the Parā Śākti should be worshipped only by becoming a woman—vāmā bhūtvā yajet Param.¹ Kumārīpūjā to which the Tantras attach special importance derives its main impulse from mother-right. It also holds good for the Christian concept of the Virgin Mother. According to Bhattacharya the high position of woman, especially in the field of religion, was due to their traditional association with agricultural magic or religion, and all this can only be explained in terms of mother-right.²

Worship of Mother Principle in pre-Vedic India

The study of Mother Goddess cult in prehistoric India is a difficult subject because of the lack of archaeological materials of the stone age cultures. Unlike the archaeological finds of palaeolithic Europe, the Indian palaeolithic sites have so far yielded no materials which could enlighten us on the Mother Goddess cult and practices in Stone Age India. In Chalcolithic Age of Indian history, however, the worship of the Mother principle was widely prevalent as is shown by the terracotta finds from Baluchistan where small agricultural communities existed even before the emergence of the Indus Civilization.³

It is, however, the Indus Civilization which gives us the earliest, positive and somewhat detailed evidence for the worship of the Mother Goddess in the form of numerous terracotta female figurines and representations on seals. The ring stones, the cylindrical stone pieces, are also symbolic proof of the existence of the Sakti worship in the Indus Civilization. We have studied its various aspects including the possibility that the Mother Goddess was regarded as the wife and sister both of the supreme god⁴ in the first volume of the present work. Here we only wish to point out that the cult of the Mother Goddess is not common to all

Bhattacharya, op. cit.

²Ibid., p. 70.

^aGoyal, S.R., RHAI, I, p. 17.

⁴RHAI, I, p. 24 f.; Cf. also Goyal, S.R., 'Yajurveda men Rudra kā Svarūpa aura uskā Aitihāsika Mahatva' Bhāratī, Bombay, VIII, ii, 1963, p. 130 ff.; 'Some Socio-Religious Aspects of the Indus Civilization', Cultural Contours of India, ed. by V.S. Srivastava, Jaipur, 1981, pp. 35-38.

the sites where the Harappan culture flourished. For instance, at Lothal in Gujarat and Kalibangan in Rajasthan, the absence of the terracotta figurines of the Mother Goddess suggests that her cult did not receive recognition in those regions.

Goddesses in the Early Vedic Religion

Goddesses occupy a subordinate position in the Vedic religion. No Somayaga was ever performed for them.2 As wives of the great gods also, they play only an insignificant part. They are mere shadowy reflections of the gods with little independent power. Hardly anything about them is mentioned and their names are formed simply by adding the feminine ani to the names of gods (e.g. Indrani, the 'wife of Indra'). In the subsequent religious history of India also Revedic goddesses have no significance. We do not find in the early Vedic literature the names of such Paurānika goddesses as Durgā, Kālī, Ambikā, Umā and others. It is only in the later Vedic texts that stray mention is made of these deities. As there is no reference to these goddesses in the RV, one may presume that originally they were tribal deities who were afterwards identified with the wife of Siva-Pasupati. Some of the Rgvedic goddesses, however, survived in later Vedic literature with lesser or greater importance than they were given in the earlier texts.3

Among the goddesses known from the RV, mention may first be made of Ushā, Ilā, Sarasvatī, Aditi, Pṛthivī, Rākā, etc. In the RV, as many as twenty hymns are devoted to Ushā and she is mentioned more than 300 times. She has all the ingredients of becoming an all-creating, all-preserving and evil-destroying deity, but she was entirely a natural phenomenon with no clear and definite anthropomorphic features. Therefore, in later days she passed into oblivion. She does not figure in the subsequent religious history of India, and is practically unknown to the Epics and Purānas. Even in the RV the attitude of honour and respect to her is not always maintained. She receives no share in the

¹Moti Chandra, 'Studies in the Cult of Mother Goddess in Ancient India', Bulletin of the Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, No. 12, Bombay, 1973, p. 2.

²Macdonell, A.A., Vedic Mythology, p. 124.

Bhattacharya, N.N., IMG, p. 100.

Somayāgas and in the RV IV. 30. 8-11, the poet admires the heroism of Indra in overcoming Ushā. According to D.D. Kosambi such legends suggest that a section of the Vedic Aryans were opposed to the cult of Ushā because it was probably borrowed from a pre-Vedic religion of the Mother Goddess. The same hymn which describes Indra's rape of Ushā also describes his success against the non-Vedic chiefs.

In the RV it is goddess Aditi who comes the nearest to the concept of an all powerful Mother Goddess. She is conceived as the Universal Mother, a mother-father, and son. She is whateyer Here we find the shall be born. principle definitely playing the supreme role. According to Max Müller Aditi is in reality the earliest word to express the infinite; not the infinite as a long process of abstract reasoning but the visible infinite, visible by naked eye, the endless expanse, beyond the clouds, beyond the sky. However some scholars take the word aditi primarily as a noun meaning 'non-binding', 'boundlessness,' etc. Roth, for example, understands the word to mean 'inviolability,' 'imperishableness,' and so on. But such epithets have nothing to do with her original conception because basically she was regarded as the mother of the gods. However, this great Mother Goddess also almost went into oblivion in the later ages; even in the Vedas she has not been separately assigned any prayer.

The Earth Goddess Prthivi is generally invoked with Dyaus, the sky-god. Individually she is lauded in one short hymn of the RV. In the Atharvaveda, however, she is given the highest esteem and is credited with great powers of creation, sustenance and ultimate destruction.

About twenty-one rivers are mentioned in the RV. Of these Sarasvatī was the first to be singled out as a goddess and was associated with Indra, Pūshan, the Maruts, the Aśvins and a host of divinities. In the Brāhmana literature she is identified with Vāk (Speech) and in the post-Vedic mythology she became the goddess of eloquence and wisdom, a muse, and the wife of Brahmā. Sarasvatī is also associated with the sacrificial goddess Ilā or Idā and Bhāratī with whom she forms a triad. But she did not have the potentiality of becoming a powerful śakti.

Among other Vedic goddesses mention may be made of the \overline{A} pah who are praised in four hymns of the RV as well as in a

few scattered passages as goddesses. As Mothers they give birth to Agni, one of whose forms is called 'Son of Waters'. Puramdhi, whose name occurs about nine times in the RV, is the goddess of plenty. Then there is Parendi, who is probably identical with the former, and Dhīshanā, mentioned nearly a dozen times. Ilā or Ida, the personification of nourishment, generally appears in the āprī sūktas in which she forms a triad with Sarasvatī and Mahī or Brhaddiva is mentioned four times in the hymns to the Viśvadevas. Rākā is mentioned only twice in the RV as a goddess of plenty. Sinīvālī, mentioned in two hymns, is a sister of the gods and is invoked to grant offspring. Gungu (Kuhū) is mentioned in name only. Then there are Pṛshṇi, the mother of the Maruts; Sītā, the corn-mother; Saranyu, the daughter of Tvashtr; Sūryā, the sun-maiden; Aranyani, the forest mother; Lakshmi and Śri; Śraddhā, an abstract deity symbolising respectfulness; Oshadhi, the herbal mother; Āpyā; Yoshā; Saramā, the dog-mother; Gandharvī; Alakshmī, the antithesis of Lakshmī; Asunīti and Nishtigr, symbolising abstract conceptions.

Although the idea of one supreme mother principle evolving the inner and outer world of thought and reality in conjunction with a male counterpart, either Siva or Vishnu, is scarcely postulated in the early Vedic literature, it is nevertheless possible to trace the first origin of this tendency in the RV itself. out of the various cosmic functions of the Rgvedic gods slowly emerges the notion of Sakti or Divine power, not surely conceived as a single category but in a pluralistic sense. "Thus, for instance. Agni is specifically described in the RV as having three functions; first, as heat-energy manifested not only in culinary or sacrificial fire, but also in his terrestrial operation as the energy of gastric fire, life and vegetative growth; second, in his operation in the atmosphere as the energy of lightning; and third, in his celestial operation as light and solar energy in the sun, the dawn and the different planetary bodies". Secondly, in the notion of Sachī, a term which was commonly used in the Vedic literature for Sakti. we find, however crude and simple, the first faint glamour of the divine Sakti principle at the earliest stage of formation.2 At one place, Sachi, the consort of Indra, is mentioned as the

¹Sastri, G., 'The Cult of Sakti', SCT, p. 11.

²Ibid., p. 12.

Goddess of Might. Later, Sachi is conceived as nothing but Indra's deeds of power deified as his wife. The term Sakti itself is used nearly a dozen times in the RV and conveys the ideas of the powers of (i) generation and (ii) fertilization. "In the philosophical sense this idea of generation, meaning 'to give birth to the world of names and forms' played an important part in the post-Vedic connotation of Sakti as the 'female creative principle' fashioning the world out of her womb (sarvaparpañchajananī)." Thirdly, there are the Rgyedic allusions to the Jñās, meaning women, occurring about seventeen or eighteen times. In the opinion of G. Sastri whereas the Rgvedic Sachis represent divine powers as the deified nature of functions of the male gods forming an essential element in the constitution of the latter's personalities, the Jñas are distinctly separate principles of female energy acting in association with their male counterparts. In the Brahmanas "all the different forms of Jña divinities have been brought under the single head of Vac who is regarded as the most typical representative of the Jñā type. The idea of Vac as the Mantra-Mother, giving birth to her three-fold progeny of Rk, Sāman and Yajus is of great importance."

Some traces of the conception of Sakti can be found in the hymn addressed to Vāk in the Devīsūkta, and in the Rātri hymn. The Devisūkta of the RV (X.125.1-8) portrays in an inimitable manner the idea of divine energy underlying every action of gods and men.2 It is to this Sūkta that the beginnings of Śāktism is traditionally traced. Here Vak, the daughter of the sage Ambhrni, describes herself as presiding over speech like Logos in Greek mythology. She ascribes to herself the sole motivating power lying at the root of every effort in the world. "I hold aloft", she declares, "Varuna and Mitra, Indra and Agni and the pair of Asvins. I cherish and sustain high dwelling Soma and Tvashtr. I support Pushan and Bhaga. I bind the bow for Rudra so that his arrows may strike and slay the hater of devotion. I have penetrated the earth and heaven... I hold together all existence".3 In the Rātrī, sūkta of the RV also the concept of the divine energy as inherent in everything, in gods, men and animals, foreshadows the similar

¹Ibid.

²Chakravarty, A.K., 'The *Devīsūkta* of the *Rgveda* and its Speciality', *PJ*, IV, Pt. II, p. 599 f.

^aSee Agrawala, V.S., Devī Māhātmya, pp. 223-35.

concept detailed in the Devimāhātmya of the $M\bar{a}rkandeya\ P$. Similarly, in a hymn of the AV (VI. 38. 1-4) the goddess is described as mother of Indra and as the one who dwells in lion, in tiger, in fire, in Brahman, in the sun, in elephant, in leopard, in gold, in waters, in chariot, in dice etc. The $Devis\bar{u}kta$ and the $R\bar{a}tris\bar{u}kta$ are read even today along with the $Devim\bar{a}h\bar{a}tmya$ in the ceremonial recitations of the latter.

Śāktism in the Middle and Later Vedic Age

From the above discussion it is obvious that though the philosophical bases of Saktism may be traced in the early Vedic texts, yet the worship of Sakti did not and could not make any appreciable progress with any of the female deities of the Rgvedic age. According to J.N. Banerjea such goddesses as Ambikā, Umā, Durgā and Kālī, who individually or collectively came to be regarded as the main divinity of the Sakti cult make their appearance only tardily one by one in the later Vedic texts. Though the name of Rudrani (the consort of Vedic Rudra) is to be found in some early Samhitā texts alongwith those of Indrani, Agnayi and Varunani (consorts of Indra, Agni and Varuna), these had no noticeable part to play in the growth and development of Sakti worship.2 / Ambikā, one of the synonyms for the Paurānika Durgā, first appears in the Vajasaneyi Samhita, of the Sukla Yajurveda as the sister of Rudra. (Esha te Rudra bhāgah saha svasra Ambikayā-III. 57).3 She is also given the same identity in the Taittirīya Brāhmaņa. However, in the Taittirīya Āraņyaka (X. 18) Rudra has been described as the husband of Ambikā (Ambikāpati). The association of the goddess with hills and mountains, especially in her Umā form, is very old and as noted below we find her first described as Umā Haimāvatī (which later meant the daughter of the Himālaya mountains) in the Kena Upanishad.

We find the emergence of Durgā in the Brāhmana period where she is connected with the sacrificial fire. Like Umā, who is also a daughter of Agni, Durgā is connected with Agni. In the *Mundaka Upa*. (3.2.4) the seven tongues of Agni are said to be Kālī, Karālī,

¹Ibid., pp. 236-38.

Banerjea, J.N., PTR, p. 114.

^{*}Goval, RHAI, I, p. 27 f.

Manojavā, Sulohitā, Sudhūmravarņā, Sphulinginī and Viśvaruchi. In the Taittiriya Aranyaka, the names of Durgi (a variant of Durgā) Vairochanī, Kātyāyanī and Kanyākumārī appear in the verses addressed to Agni.1 The Durgāgāyatrī of this text reads Kātyāyanāya (Kātyāyanyai) vidmahe Kanyākumārīm dhīmahi tan no Durgih prachodayāt ['We think on Kātyāyana (Kātyāyani) and meditate on Kanyākumārī; may Durgī advance us']. According to R.G. Bhandarkar Kātyāyanī probably denoted the special goddess worshipped by the sages of the Kātya gotra.2 Kanyākumārī represents the virgin-daughter aspect of the goddess. The Periplus of the Erythrean Sea, a work of the first century A.D. by some unknown Classical author, while describing a port of extreme southern India, states: "There is another place called Comari and a harbour It is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed'. According to J.N. Banerjea it is one of the earliest notices of a class of Sakti-worshippers from a foreign source.3 Thus, it is obvious that during the Middle Vedic period, there was a definite attempt of assimilating some pre-Aryan Mother Goddess forms. The various iconographic forms of the Mother Goddess, the references to their legs of wood or their dwelling in the caves, all point to the indebtedness of the cult of Sakti to the beliefs and practices of the non-Aryans or rather the non-Vedic or non-Brahmanical people living in forests and hilly tracts of the country after having yielded the plains to the Aryans.

Goddesses in the Upanishads

If we leave out the Śvetāśvatara, we find that in the principal Vedic Upanishads the word Śakti is not directly mentioned. Therefore, the ancient writers frequently quote from the Śvetāśvatara, but seldom from the Brhadāranyaka or Mundaka, etc., to prove the Vedic origin of Śāktism. However, in the Nārāyana Upanishad, belonging to the Taittirīya Āranyaka, we find a hymn in the form of a

¹According to A.K. Chakraborty in the RV the hymn to Durgā appears in the 25th Khilasūkta and in the Brhaddevatā Saunaka observes that the goddess Vāk in the form of Durgā wrote hymns dedicated to herself ('Rgvede Devī Pūjā', Bhāratavarsha, Calcutta, Year 51, Vol. I, No. 5, 1963, pp. 610-24, quoted in PJ, II, 2, p. 262).

Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 144.

Banerjea, op. cit.

Gāyatrī addressed to the Divine Energy¹ wherein, as noted above, she has been described as Kanyākumārī and Durgī. In another sūkta of the same work she has been addressed as Durgā, and is described as a 'flaming goddess' associated with the Universal Self, and worshipped by the devotces for the sake of material gains here and hereafter and for liberation from the cycle of saṁsāra. In brief, she plays the part of Brahmavidyā. In the Kena Upanishad (III. 12), we find mention of Umā Haimāvatī. who appeared before the minor gods to enlighten them with the esoteric knowledge of the Supreme Being. In his commentary Śaṅkarāchārya actually identifies her with Brahmavidyā.²

The names of Kālī and Karālī are first met with in the Mundaka Upanishad though here they denote two of the seven tongues of Agni. The number, seven, reminds one of the Saptamātṛkā concept (infra, p. 309 ff.). Bhavānī, a very popular name of the Devī in the Paurāṇika Śāktism is the female form of Bhava, the peaceful aspect of Rudra-Śiva while the name Rudrāṇī means the wife of Rudra, the terrific aspect of the god. Bhadrakālī is obviously the saumya form of Kālī, the terrific deity. These names occur in the Śārkhāyana- and Hiranyakeśī-Grhyasūtras.

Śāktism in the Epics

In the Epics the goddesses of the later Vedic literature become more prominent and those of early Vedic pantheon recede into the background. The early Vedic goddess Aditi is still the wife of Kaśyapa and the mother of the Ādityas, and of the gods. In the HV she is identified with Durgā, the Earth and even Devakī, the mother of Kṛṣhṇa She is described as jealous of her Vedic antithesis Diti, another wife of Kaśyapa and mother of the demons. Pṛthivī, often described as daughter of Pṛthu and as Virāj and addressed as the Great Mother, is imagined as a divine cow giving milk to her children. She provides wealth and is the bountiful producer of corn. She is conspicuously associated with Vishṇu and is known by her epithet Vaishṇavī. However, so far as their associations and

 $^{{}^{1}}T\bar{A}$, 10.1, (quoted above, p. 290).

²Sharma, Vaidehi Sharan, 'Sakti Pūjā ke Mūla Srota', Saptasindhu, Patiala, XII, No. 6, 1965, p. 75 ff.; Goyal, S.R., 'The Origin of Sakti Cult', (in Hindi), Purākalpa, Varanasi, 1974, IV, Pt. II.

functional aspects are concerned, in the Epics both Aditi and Prthivi are treated as minor divinities. Ushā is deprived of even this minimum recognition, for in the Mbh. she is merely a human being, daughter of Bāṇa and beloved of Aniruddha.

Later Vedic goddesses, however, receive greater importance in the Epics. Of the Vaishnavite goddesses Śrī and Lakshmī, who play a significant part in the subsequent religious history of India, are usually identified with each other. We have discussed Śrī-Lakshmī in detail in Ch. 8 (pp. 223-30). Alakshmī, the antithesis of Lakshmī and the presiding goddess of all evils, finds mention in the Mbh. in connection with Kālī. Other abstract goddesses like Kīrti, Dhṛti, Medhā, Pushṭi, Śraddhā, Kriyā, Buddhi, Lajjā, Mati, etc., also find mention. Sometimes they are regarded as daughters of Daksha and wives of Dharma.

Among the Later Vedic goddesses, without distinct sectarian affiliations, mentioned in the two Epics, one is Vak identified with Sarasvatī, the supposed consort of Brahmā. This relation did not develop in the Mbh. in which she is as yet the daughter of Brahmā.2 Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī is mentioned in the Mbh. as the daughter of the Sun and wife of Brahma. She is often described as the Mother of the Vedas and identified with Umā or Durgā. Three minor Vedic goddesses, Rākā, Sinīvālī and Kuhū are mentioned in the Mbh. as moon-phases. Among other Vedic goddesses mentioned in the Epics are included Indrani, also known as Sachi or Paulomi, wife of Indra; Rudrāņi, wife of Rudra; Devi, wife of Varuna; and Niggti, the mother of death. The Vedic corn-mother Sītā has become humanized as the heroine of the Rāmā, but it is also stated that she rose in the field (for details vide Ch. 8, p.221). She is called corn-crowned (dhānyamālinī). The HV mentions Sītāyajña or sacrifice in honour of Sītā offered exclusively by the ploughmen.3

Goddesses like Ambikā, Aparņā, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Gaurī, Kauśikī, Śākambharī, Umā, etc., were of Śaivite affiliation, but later they all became identified with the supreme goddess of the Śāktas. Umā, also known as Pārvatī, is the daughter of the Himālaya

¹Bhattacharya, N.N., The Indian Mother Goddess, New Delhi, 1977, p. 103.

^{*}Ibid., p. 104.

^{*}Ibid.

and wife of Siva. She is mentioned at many places in the two Epics with her epithtes such as Giriputrī, Girirājaputrī, Śailarājaputrī, Nāgarājaputrī, Girīśā, Nāgakanyā, Parvatarājakanyā, etc., which indicate her association with the Himālayan region. The HV derives the name Umā from 'don't', as her mother Menā thus addressed her for being austere.1 This name reminds one of Ma or the Mother and her conception goes back to the primitive and universal cult of the Mother Goddess. In the Kirātārjuna episode of the Mbh. Umā is described as a Kirāta woman. She is mentioned in connection with Skanda's birth and Jayadratha's Siva worship and also as the presiding deity of the northern quarters. At some places she is mentioned along with Aditi, Hrī, Śrī, Svāhā, Sarasvatī and others. She is mentioned also in the Daksha-Yajña episode and in the Śiva-Umā Samvāda. In the Rāmā. she is mentioned as the younger sister of Gangā, born of Menā and the Himālaya. She granted a boon to the demons that their children would attain the age of their mothers immediately after their birth. The legend shows that Umā had a soft corner for the non-Vedic people, her original worshippers.2

However, on the whole $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$. does not contain any clear and definite evidence about the position of the Sakti cult. The story of Rāma's worship of the goddess Durgā for her help in his efforts to destroy Rāvaṇa as narrated in the Devībhāgavata P. and Kālikā P. and in the Bengali $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}yaṇa$ of Kṛttivāsa does not occur in the $R\bar{a}m\bar{a}$. ascribed to Vālmīki. The two Durgāstotras in the Mbh., one in the Virāṭaparvan (IV.6) recited by Yudhishṭhira and the other in the Bhīshmaparvan (VI.23) recited by Arjuna on the advice of Kṛshṇa, and the third one (Āryāstava) included in the HV (Vishṇuparvan, Chapter III), however throw welcome light on the position of the Śakti cult when these stutis were composed.³

The Āryāstava is a close knit structure. In the first three or four verses, stress is laid on the Aryan elements of the Goddess. She is addressed as Āryā, Nārāyaṇī, Tribhuvaneśvarī, Śrī, Rātri, Kātyāyanī, and Kauśikī. In the following verses however "her association with hills, particularly the Vindhyas, rivers, caves,

¹*Ibid.*, p. 10.

²Ibid., p. 108.

Banerjea, PTR, p. 108.

forests and gardens, her connection with various domestic and wild animals, the fact of her being worshipped with great veneration by non-Aryan tribes like the Sabaras, the Barbaras and the Pulindas, are highlighted". Then are given some of her various names and attributes including her daughtership of Nandagopa and sisterhood of Baladeva (she is Ekānamśā in this aspect), and her fondness of wine, meat, sacrifices etc., is mentioned. She is called Lakshmī and Alakshmī both, and also the personification of death, mother of the mantras and Gāyatrī of the gods. She is said to pervade, the whole universe and is described as the saviour in all sorts of dangers. In the end the author prays that his mind, conception and heart may always remain concentrated on her.

In the first of the two Durgāstotras of the Mbh. Yudhishṭhira describes the goddess as the beloved of Nārāyaṇa, destroyer of Asuras, preserver of the three worlds and as residing in the Vindhya mountains. She is called Durgā, Kālī and Mahākālī. She loves wine, blood and meat. It may be noted that here Durgā is invoked as if she has nothing to do with Siva. In the second stotra Arjuna describes some of these names and epithets and also praises her as Āryā, Kāpālī, Karālī, Bhadrakālī, Chaṇḍī, Kātyāyanī, Kauśikī, sister of Gopendra (Kṛṣhṇa), Śakambharī, Brahmadiyā, Sāvitrī, Vedaśruti, Vedamātā, Skandamātā, fond of buffalo's blood etc.

As pointed out by Banerjea in this stava every sentiment is pure and sublime; there is not the least hint about the erotic sensual character of her Tantrika form. Here both Aryan and non-Aryan elements have contributed to the evolution of the her concept. She is conceived both—as the deity of the rshis of the Kuśika and Katya gotras and also of the Śabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas. The association of Durgā with Kṛṣhṇa is also significant.

Śāktism in the Purāņas

From the point of view of literary history, broadly the age of Sūtras and the Epics was followed by the age of the Purāṇas. As we have seen earlier the Mahāpurāṇas, eighteen in number, were composed

¹Ibid., p. 119 f.

²Ibid., p. 120.

² Ibid. Cf. also Kumar, Pushpendra, Śakti Cult in Ancient India, Varanesi, 1974, p. 26 ff.

in their present form in the Gupta and post-Gupta periods while the Upapurāṇas, traditionally also regarded as eighteen, were composed later. Materials for the study of Śāktism is found more or less in almost all the Purāṇas, but the Devībhāgavata, the Devīmāhātmya (DM) Section of the Mārkaṇḍeya P., the Kālikā P. and the Lalitāsahasra Section of the Brahmāṇḍa P. are more important for this purpose. The Devībhāgavata is included amongst the Mahāpurāṇas by the Śiva, the Matsya, and the Kālikā Purāṇas while the Padma, the Nārada, the Skanda and the Kūrma Purāṇas relegate it to the status of an Upapurāṇa, substituting the Vaishṇava Bhāgavata P. in its place.¹

The Devīmāhātmya or the Durgāśaptaśatī

The Devimāhātmya or the Durgāsaptaśatī, which now exists as an independent scripture also, is a part of the Mārkandeya P. (Chapters 81-93) just as the Gītā is an independent work and also a part of the Mbh. In many other ways also it resembles the Gītā. In the Gītā there are 700 verses. In the current vulgate edition of the DM also, the text is stretched to 700 verses, counting among them stage directions like the Rshiruvācha, Rājorvācha, Mārkandeya uvācha, etc. also. Hence its popular name Saptaśatī. Further, like the Gītā it is a work of rare beauty and synthesis. As pointed out by V.S. Agrawala,2 it accepts the ancient Vedic tradition in the form of Vāk and Trayī Vidyā and the philosophical doctrine of the codified system of Sāmkhya (Prakṛti manifesting as the three guṇas) and Vedānta as Paramavidyā, the cause of Mukti. The trend of the Paurāņika thought is also fully reflected in it. Further, it synthesises the then prevailing numerous local Mother Goddess cults of both Aryan and non-Aryan origin of which a comprehensive list is found in the Puranas in the form of 108 Devi Pithas (infra, p. 305 ff.). The DM itself mentions some of the Devi forms such as Bhramari, Śākambharī, Śatākshī, Bhī mādevī etc. Its author synthesises the Śakti cult with Vaishnavism and other sects also by his conception of the Goddess as the Supreme Power of Lord Vishnu (Vishnumāyā, Nārāyaṇī, Vaishṇavī, Mahālakshmī etc.) and as the embodiment of

¹Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'The Evolution of the Sakti Cult in the post-Vedic Period', (in Hindi), *Purākalpa*, Varanasi, 1974, IV, Pt. III, pp. 38-49.

²Agrawala, V.S., Devī Māhātmya, Varanasi, 1963, Preface, p. ix.

the collectivity of the Śaktis of the various Paurāṇika gods. For this he utilizes the doctrine of avatāra which is also expounded in the Gītā. Further he explains Devī as descending to the level of human manifestation in the form of Chetanā, Buddhi, Nidrā, Kshudā, Śakti, Tṛshṇā, Śānti, Śraddhā, Kānti, Vṛtti, Smṛti, Dayā, Tushṭi, Mātṛ, and the all-pervading Vyāpti and Chiti. "Thus like a bejewelled casket inlaid with gems of all brilliant hues the Devī Māhātmya is a work of supreme poetic merit in which different rays of thought are faithfully reflected in a spirit of broad understanding".1

The determination of the age of the composition of the DM broadly depends upon the age of the Mārkandeya P. of which it is a part. Pargiter and V.S. Agrawala believe that the Mārkandeya P. is a product of the Gupta age.2 D.R. Bhandarkar3 has shown that a verse from the DM is quoted in an inscription of 609 A.D. There are found used a number of Gupta motifs and conceptions in the Mārkandeyā P.—e.g. the conception of the Padminī Vidyā based on the idea of distribution of wealth among various classes, the Kūrma vibhāga division of the geography of India, the idea of the rain of gold, the description of the death of Mahishāsura while coming out in half-human form from the half-severed animal throat finding expression for the first time in the Mahishamardini images of the Gupta age, the iconographic representation of the Saptamātrkās in the Gupta images exactly after their description in the DM and, above all, the spirit of religious toleration and synthesis evidenced by this work and the Gupta civilization both.4

The DM describes the Devicharita in three parts: (1) Pūrvacharita which narrates the divine conflict against the demons Madhu and Kaiṭabha; (2) Madhyamacharita which describes her battle against Mahishāsura, and (3) Uttaracharita in which her battle against Śumbha and Niśumbha, Chaṇḍa and Muṇḍa and Raktabīja are narrated. The story opens in the hermitage of a ṛshi named Medhā with the arrival of an extremely virtuous king named Suratha who had been defeated by his enemies in battle. Even in his

¹*Ibid.*, p. x.

²¹bid., p. iv; Pargiter, Mārkaņdeya Purāņa, Intro., p. xiv.

^{*}JBBRAS, XXIII, p. 73.

^{*}Cf. Agrawala, V.S., op. cit., p. iv ff.; also see his Markandeya Purana-Eka Samskṛtika Adhyayana.

capital, which was lost to him, his ministers looted all his treasures and power. One day he met near the hermitage of Medha a Vaiśya named Samādhi. The Vaiśya was also an extremely virtuous person and was born in rich a family, but his wealth was taken by his dishonest wife and son and he was out to the forest by his unfaithful friends. Being afflicted in their hearts both of them went to the sage and, like Arjuna of the Gītā, requested him to explain to them why did they feel affection towards those who had betrayed and deserted them. They were conscientious of right and wrong yet both of them appeared to be blind to their conscience. What was the cause of this ignorance and bewilderment? The sage explained to them: All lives are conscious, but that knowledge is connected with senses. That Goddess Bhagavatī, granting all kinds of prosperity, makes even the wise attracted to worldly pleasures and things forcibly with her great power of attraction. This ever-changing world with all its animate and inanimate beings, is created by her. As the cause of salvation she turns into supreme spiritual knowledge, and is thus eternal; and again as the cause of bondage to worldly things she turns into things mundane and is the mistress of all, including gods. She is eternal (and is thus beyond our knowledge) and pervades the world which may accordingly be called her form. Yet for the assistance of the lustrous souls, she appears in different forms. The sage, then, narrated to Suratha and Samadhi the holy wars that occurred between the Goddess Chandi and the great Asuras (giants) Madhu-Kaitabha, Mahishasura, Sumbha-Nisumbha etc., in the from of the three Charitas mentioned above.

In the Pūrvacharita Brahmā faces the danger of losing his life at the hands of the two demon brothers, Madhu and Kaiṭabha even though he was sitting close to Vishņu, for the latter was lying in deep Yogic sleep under the influence of Devī in her Yoganidrā aspect. On Brahmā's earnest prayer to her (Brahmā-stuti) she took away her spell, and Vishņu saved Brahmā by killing the Asuras.¹

In the Madhyamacharita Mahishāsura, a mighty Asura, abjectly defeats the gods and, after driving them out of heaven,

¹For a mystic interpretation of the this myth, vide H.C. Paul, 'Mystic Significance of the Madhu-Kaiṭabha Myth', Aryan Path, XXXV11, No. 5, 1966, pp. 210-5.

rules there in their place. The gods resort to Vishņu and Siva in their predicament who along with Brahmā, became very angry, and out of the accumulated anger and energy of these three and of all the other gods appeared a female covering the three worlds with her resplendence. The gods supplied her their respective weapons and she killed Mahishāsura and his retinue after a great fight. Relieved of their danger Indra and other gods recited a stuti in her praise (Śakrādi-stuti).

In the Uttamacharita the gods, again harassed by the two Asura brothers, Sumbha and Nisumbha resort to their protectress, the all-pervading godddess Vishnumāyā, another aspect of the Devī with fulsome prayers and adoration (Vishnumāyā-stava). She kills both the mighty demons along with Dhumralochana, Chanda, Munda, Raktabija and their vast Asura army. Thereupon gods with Indra and Agni at their head recited the best of praise, (Nārāyaṇī-stuti) to propitiate her. In the last 14 verses of this section of the DM (Ch. XI, 41-54), Devi recites her verious future manifestations in different ages for the purpose of destroying the evil-doers, and for sustaining the world. In the last verses of this canto she assures the gods and through them the world (as does Kṛshṇa in the Gītā) that 'whensoever (the world) will face such troubles through the appearance of the demons (evil and wicked persons), I shall incarnate myself and destroy the enemies' (cf. Ch. 3, p. 83).

A critical and analytical study of the four Devi-stutis mentioned above (Brahmā-stuti, Śakrādi-stuti, Vishņumāyā-stava and Nārāyaṇī-stuti), specially the last one, helps us to know much about the nature of the Paurāṇika Śakti worship. In these stutis Devī tells the gods that born as the offspring of Yaśodā and dwelling in the Vindhyas she will destroy Śumbha and Niśumbha, two other brothers of these names; as Raktadantikā she will devour the demons of the Viprachitti lineage; as Śatākshī she will appear during the time of drought and as Śākambharī nourish the whole world; as Durgā she will kill the Asura Durgama; as Bhīmā she will destroy the Rākshasas on the Himavat and as Bhrāmarī she will slay the demon Aruṇa. These stutis are very skillfully interspersed in the DM. They contain, like the Durgāstotras of the Mbh. and the Āryāstava of the HV, references to her Vedic and non-Vedic strands, to her peaceful and terrific forms, to

her three aspects as mother, sister and daughter, to her saviour aspect, as well as to her several other features. The Nārāyaṇī-stuti, the most important of these hymns, speaks of her as Vaishṇavīśakti sustaining the whole universe, of her Mātṛkā forms and of her Lakshmī, Sarasvatī, Nārāyaṇī, Kātyāyanī, Durgā, Bhadrakālī, Ambikā and other manifestations.¹

Paurānika Śaktivāda: Development of Philosophical Aspects

The Paurāņika Durgā-Pārvatī embodies the highest philosophical principles in her personality. She is omnipotent, a creator of heaven and earth and of the gods as well, the primeval energy (ādyāśakti) and the supreme deliverer. The verses of the DM (Chs. 81-93) which describe her as the creator of Brahma-Vishnu-Maheśvara and as the Mother and Queen of the three worlds, merely echo the Vedic Vāgambhrnī hymn where the Supreme Goddess is made to say 'I move with the Rudras, the Vasus....' The Upanishadic Umā also provided the philosophical basis for the Sakta philosophers of the later ages, for though called Haimavatī she was actually as yet unconnected with the Himālayas and appears in this text more or less as the embodiment of Prakrti. After the rise and development of the six philosophical systems abstract philosophical ideas, specially of Sāmkhya and Vedānta, came to play even more significant role in moulding the Śākta theological concepts. The Sāmkhya doctrine of the duality of Prakṛti and Purusha demanded corresponding theological duality. Śiva and Durgā were an answer to this. As Yogīśvara Śiva sits aloof and satisfies the followers of the Yoga system, together with his active wife or Sakti he becomes inactive Purusha and his wife the embodiment of the active Prakti principle. Thus Siva and Sakti satisfy the religious demands at more than one level of consciousness.2

The Purāṇas, specially the Sakta and the Saiva ones, discuss the philosophical significance of the Sakti principle at numerous places. They usually describe her either in the light of

¹For a mystic and symbolic study of the DM, vide V.S. Agrawala, Devi Māhātmya, Varanasi, 1963.

²Cf. Agrawala, V.S., 'The Glorification of the Great Goddess', *Purāṇa*, V, No. 1, 1963, pp. 68-89.

Sāmkhya dualism or Advaitika monism or combine the two as two aspects of the same truth. In the DM of the Markandeya P. Durgā is pure consciousness (chiti) (V. 78-80), the power of Siva (XI. 14) and the Māyā of Vishņu (V. 14-16). She produces Sattva, She is Prakțti, the creative energy, the Rajas and Tamas. omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent creator, preserver and destroyer of the world. She is devoid of gunas but assumes them to create the world out of them (IV. 7). She is the nature (Viśvātmikā), the ground (Viśvāśraya) and ruler of the world (Viśveśvarī). She is cosmic nescience (Mahāmāyā), the all-pervading conscious power (Vyāptidevī) and the cosmic or highest knowledge (Mahāvidyā and Paramavidyā).1 At one place in the DM Devi is invoked thus: "Thou art the cause of all the worlds. Though characterised by three qualities, even by Hari, Hara and other gods thou art incomprehensible. Thou art the resort of all; thou art the entire world which is composed of parts. Thou verily art the sublime original nature untransformed Thou art Medha, O Goddess, thou hast comprehended the essence of all scriptures. Thou art Durga, the boat to cross the ocean of existence, devoid of attachments. Thou art Śrī who has her dominion in the heart of the enemy of Kaiṭabha. Thou art indeed Gaurī who has fixed her dwelling in that of the moon created god."

Almost the same ideas are echoed in the Devībhāgavata P.² In this work she is described as the Nirākāra and Nirguņa Brahman and yet endowed with three qualities of Sattva, Rajas and Tamas. Her nature is real and unreal both. She becomes Mahālakshmī in Sāttvikī power, Mahāsarasvatī in her Rājasikī power and Mahākālī in her Tāmasikī power.³ She incites Brahmā to create, Vishņu to protect and Śiva to destroy. She is Ādyāśakti who transcends all guṇas though she is also the substratum of them. She is Prakṛti as well as Brahman. In this Purāṇa Vyāsa exclaims: "O Devī when Brahmā, Vishņu, Maheśa, Varuṇa, Kubera, Yama and Agni were not, thou alone existed then.... O Mother, you hold all these visible Jīvalokas in the cosmic Hiranyagarbha."

¹Kumar, P., Sakti Cult in Ancient India, p. 47 ff.

²¹bid., p. 53.

³ Ibid.

The presiding deity of the Devibhāgavata P. is called Śrī Bhuvaneśvarī. She dwells in the Manidvipa surrounded by all other gods and goddesses—all the Mahāvidyās, Pīthaśaktis, Kalās, and the various other groups of gods and goddesses.

The Sakti of the Devibhāgavata is Vaishņavī and Sāńkarī simultaneously. The Devibhāgavata also describes her cosmic form or Virāṭarūpa which she showed to the gods. In her Virāṭarūpa, Sattvaloka is situated on the top of her head, sun and moon are her eyes, the Vedas are her words, etc. All the gods fainted when they looked at that form (cf. the Viśvarūpa of Kṛshṇa in the $G\bar{u}\bar{a}$).

The later or Paurāṇika Upanishads also describe the philosophical and popular aspect of Śakti. They lay great stress on Śakti as the creative power of Brahman. She is described as the mother of universe (*Tripura Upa*.). Several later Upanishads contain Tāntrika-Yaugika description of Mahātripurasundarī. The *Bhavrchopanishad* identifies her with a number of goddesses. The *Saubhāgyalakshmī Upa*. contains Tāntrika-Yaugika description of Mahālakshmī. Durgā is the subject of the *Tripuratāpanī Upa*. In the *Rāmatāpanī Upa*. Sītā as Śakti is identified with the Prakṛti of Rāma. The *Sumukhī Upa*. describes Śakti as a beautiful girl of sixteen seated on a corpse.²

Lines of Growth and Development of Durgā-Pārvatī Concept: the Absorption of the non-Aryan Deities

Devi—Durgā-Pārvatī—is a composite concept of the female principle, in which different ethnic and regional ideas, beliefs and practices, have combined in a manner which made it acceptable to both—the non-Aryan and the Aryan—strands of the Indian population. The role of the non-Aryan elements in the development of the conception of Devi has been delineated by R.C. Hazra³ on the basis of Śākta Upapurāṇas and by J.N. Banerjea⁴ with the help of the two Durgāstoras of the Mbh. (IV.6 and VI.22) and the Āryāstava of the HV (III.3). They have shown

¹Cf. Date, V.H., Brahma-Yoga of the Gitā, New Delhi, 1971, p. 424 ff.

²Kumar, P., Sakti Cult in Ancient India, Varanasi, 1974, pp. 20-23.

^aHazra, R.C., Studies in the Upapuranas, II, pp. 16-22. ^bDHI, p. 491.

how Durgā-Pārvatī on the one hand represents the continuation. atleast on the philosophical plane, of the Vedic-Upanishadic tradition and, on the other, is an example of the evolution of the multi-dimensional personality of a goddess who by the use of the various devices (namely the theory of incarnation, the doctrine of vibhūti, the legend of the Sakti, Pīthas and the concept of the Matrganas etc.) absorbed the main traits of the innumerable regional goddesses of the Indian sub-continent most of whom were non-Arvan in origin.1

Besides the lofty philosophical ideas about Devi, which were mostly the development of the Vedic tradition, there was also popular conception of her which was largely the result of the non-Aryan influences. In her Parvatī form Devī is the daughter of the Himālaya and Menā. She is the wife of Siva, the Supreme God, and mother of Ganesa, Karttikeya etc. In her saumya or benign form she is the embodiment of motherhood and ideal of satī. But in her fierce or terrible (ugra) aspect she is the destroyer of the asuras such as Durgam, Mahisha, Madhu, Kaitabha, Sumbha, In the Durgastotras of Nisumbha and a host of others. the Mbh. and the DM emphasis is laid on her character as a fighting or war-goddess. In expressions like Kālī, Karālī, Mahākālī, Kāpālī, Kapilā, Kṛshṇapingalā, Ashṭaśūla-praharaṇā, Khadgakheţaka-dhārinī, Vijayā, Jayā, Aţṭahāsā, Kālāmukhī, Raṇapriyā, etc., her destructive as well as fighting roles are mainfested.

The non-Aryan elements in the personality of Durga-Parvati are too patent to be ignored. In the Durgastotra of the Bhīshmaparvan she has been mentioned as a dweller in great forests, frightful places and unapproachable countries, while in the other stotra, found in the Virataparvan, she has been described as living in the Vindhya mountains. This association of Devi with the Vindhyas has further been emphasised in the HV (II.22.52-55) where she is described as the one who killed Sumbha and Nisumbha who roamed in the Vindhya mountains. She is also described as anointed by the ghosts and worshipped by bands of robbers, and as decorated with jars full of wine and meat. The Āryāstava (HV II.3.6-9) also describes her as Vindhyavāsinī,

¹Cf. Swami, Narahari, 'Durgā aura Durgā Pūjā kā Māhātmya,' Tripathagā, XI, No. i, Oct. 1965, p. 17 f.; Sarkar, Amal, 'The Symbolism of Durgā Image and Durgā Pūjā', Modern Review, C XIV, No. 5, 1963, p. 360 ff.

crowded by cocks, goats, sheep, lions and tigers, worshipped by the Sabaras, Barbaras and Pulindas and as having peacock-tail as a mark. The identity of this goddess with the one referred to in the Durgā-stotras is proved by their common association with forests, mountains and beasts, by their common connection with peacock-tail and also from the reference to wine and meat as favoured by Devī in both the texts. Again, in the Purāṇas, we find that Kālī in the Kālañjara mountain, Chaṇḍikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhya mountains are mentioned as the different manifestations of the Devī and her particular liking for wine and meat has also been referred to.

As pointed out by A.K. Bhattacharya, the evidence of the Puranas on this point is supported by secular literature. Bana in his Kādambarī has mentioned that the Sabaras considered offering of narabali to their goddess as a meritorious act and that they offered animals to their deity. In the Harshacharita, too, he refers to the performance of animal sacrifice for her. In the Gaudavaho (first half of the 8th century A.D.) King Yasovarman offers a hymn of fifty-two couplets to the goddess Vindhyavāsinī in which fearful atmosphere of her temple and its surroundings, the slaying of the buffalo-demon by her and her association with the peacocks are mentioned. The Gaudavaho also mentions that human sacrifice was offered daily to the goddess of the Sabaras who lived in a cave of the Vindhyas. From the Kathāsaritsāgara also it appears that the wild hill tribes of the Vindhya range, indiscriminately called Sabara, Pulinda, Bhīla etc., offered human sacrifice to their supreme deity.2

As early as the Mbh. Durgā is called Kālī and Mahākālī just as Šiva, the destroyer, is Kāla or Mahākāla. Philosophically in this aspect she is the personification of Kāla, the all-destroying Time and is fierce because she embodies the principle of destruction. But as pointed out by S. Bhattacharji this image is the product of at least two factors—on the popular plane she is the dreaded (ugra) aspect of Durgā, the familiar deadly goddess of the primitive people, who sends gruesome plagues, diseases, pain, torture, misery, fear and death, and on the conceptual plane she is the elevated

¹Bhattacharya, A.K., 'A Non-Aryan Aspect of the Devi', SCT, p. 58. ²Ibid., p. 58 f.; Bhattacharji, S., The Indian Theogony, p. 173.

idea of change concomitant with time, mutability and ineluctible fate.1 Durgā is conceived as many armed, a feature which is totally absent in the conception of Pārvatī-Umā. It is in the Mārkandeya and Vāmana Purāņas, and also in other Devi-oriented Puranas that we have her terrible demon-slayer form represented further developed as Kālī. by Chandikā or Kauśikī, was probably associated with the people goddess Kauśikī came to be identified of the Kuśika gotra and later According to the DM Kausiki emerged from the kosa of Pārvatī due to which the latter turned black and became known Elsewhere dwelling in the Himālayas. Kā'ikā same text, Kālī emerges from the forehead of Chandikā with the purpose of killing the demons Chanda and Munda, and after having accomplished the task she receives the epithet Chāmundā. As the word Chāmuṇḍā cannot be derived from Chaṇḍa-Muṇḍa it must be held that Chāmundā and Kālī were originally different goddesses. Kauśikī, Chandikā, Kālī, etc. were evidently adopted in the Sakta pantheon from the surviving tribal divinities. As noted above, Kālī in Kālanjara, Chandikā in Makarandaka and Vindhyavāsinī in the Vindhyas are mentioned in the Matsya P. as the manifestations of the supreme goddess. Aparnā, a name by which Kālī is sometimes identified, signifies a deity 'without her leaf cloth'. This naked goddess must have originally been worshipped by such a tribe as the Nagna-Sabaras (the naked-Sabaras) of the Brhatsamhitā2. Mythologically her most important aspect is that of Mahishasuramardini, the myth of which forms the main topic of the DM. form of the goddess has been specially popular from the Kushana and early Gupta periods onwards. One of its earliest representations is found on the facade of a cave at Udayagiri (M.P.).

Incarnations, Vibhūtis and other Manifestations

Like Vaishnavism Śāktism also adopted a number of devices to strengthen its syncretistic approach. On of these devices was the theory of incarnation which is propounded in the DM and Devībhāgavata P. almost in the words of the Gītā. The Skanda P. also describes the various incarnations of Devī including those in

¹Bhattacharji, S., op. cit., p. 174.

^{*}Bhattacharya, N.N., IMG, p. 121.

the form of Pārvatī or Umā, Viśvabhujā, Śrīmātā, Mātangī, Bhūtamātā, Subhadrā, Durgā, Kātyāyanī, Chāmundā, Satī, and a host of others.1 In some texts such as the Devi P. the manifestations of Devī are divided under Sāttvika, Rājasika and Tāmasika groups.2 The most important incarnations of Devī are called the Nava Durgās. Various lists of them are given in different texts. The Bhavishya P. names them as follows: Mahālakshmī, Nandā, Kshemankarī, Sivadūtī, Mahātuņḍā, Bhrāmarī, Sarvamangalā, Revatī and Harasiddhi. Devī has eight other forms corresponding to the eight forms of Siva. They are: Mangalā, Vimalā, Sarvamangalā, Alambā, Kālarātri, Marīchikā, Chandarupā and Rudrānī. Then there are ten Mahāvidyās, viz. Kālī, Tārā, Chhinnamastā, Śrīvidyā, Bhuvaneśvarī, Bhairavī, Bagalā, Dhumrā, Tripurasundarī and Mātangī. The yoginīs sometimes represented as sorceresses and sometimes as Kuladevatās, are usually described as 64 in number.3 The concept of the Mātrgaņas has been discussed below.

As in the *Bhagavadgītā*, so in the *DM* there is a description of the vibhūtis of the deity. When the demon-king accuses Devī of fighting with the help of other goddesses, Devī replies: "I am all alone in the world. All these goddesses are but my own vibhūtis. These are projected by me and are also withdrawn by myself whenever it is necessary" (IX. 6)4.

The Śakti Pithas

An idea of the popularity of the Sakti cult may be formed from the evidence of the Epics, Purāṇas and other texts regarding the holy places connected with Devī⁵. The Tīrthayātra Section of the Vanaparvan of the Mbh. refers at least to three holy places associated with the Yonī (sexual organ) and stanas (breasts) of

¹Kumar, P., op. cit., P. 228 f.

²Ibid., p. 231.

³Ibid., p. 236.

^{*}Cf. Paul, H.C., 'An Approach to the Mystic Philosophy of Candi', Professor Surya Kumar Bhuyan Commemoration Volume, Gauhati, 1966, pp. 238-47. For the concept of Vibhūtis in the Gītā, vide Date, op. cit., p. 390 ff. 5For details vide IMG, p. 236 ff.

Devi. It also speaks of Pushkara, Kurukshetra and Śākambharitīrtha as Devītīrthas. The Hevajratantra of the Buddhists enumerates the following four holy regions as pithas of the goddess: (i) Jālandhara, (ii) Odiyāna, (iii) Pūrņagiri and (iv) Kāmarūpa. Other Buddhist works, such as the Sādhanamālā give the four names as Odiyāna or Uddiyāna, Pūraņagiri, Kāmarūpa or Kāmākhyā and Śrīhatta or Sirihatta. The Rudrayāmala (c. tenth century A.D.) mentions ten holy places associated with Sakta-Besides the above four these include Tāntrika practices. (v) Vārāņasī, (vi) Javalantī (Jvālāmukhī of later texts), (vii) Māyāvatī (near Hardwar), (viii) Madhupurī (Mathurā), (ix) Ayodhyā and (x) Kāñchī (Kāñchī puram). The number increases to eighteen The Jñānārnavatantra has two lists-one Kulārnava. containing eight names and the other fifty.

The Kubjikātantra enumerates the following forty-two centres of the Sakti cult: Māyāvatī, Madhupurī, Kāśī, Gorakshakāriṇī, Hiṅgulā, Jālandhara, Jvālāmukhī, Nagarasambhava, Rāmagiri, Godāvarī, Nepāla, Karṇasūtra, Mahākarṇā, Ayodhyā, Kurukshetra, Siṁhala, Maṇipura, Hṛshikeśa, Prayāga, Badari, Ambikā, Vardhamāna or Ardhanālaka, Triveṇī, Gaṅgāsāgara-saṅgama, Nārikela, Virajā,¹ Uḍḍiyāna, Kamalā, Vimalā, Mahishmatī, Vārāhī Tripurā, Vāgmatī, Nīlavāhinī, Govardhana, Vindhyagiri, Kāmarūpa, Ghaṇṭākarṇa, Hayagrīva, Mādhava, Kshīragrāma and Vaidyanātha. A few of these sites have been mentioned above and some others are well-khown places of Hindu pilgrimage.

The Purāṇas, especially the later ones, are more elaborate on this point. The Matsya and other Purāṇas enumerate the following 108 names of Devī and of the Pīthas sacred to each of them (though there are some variations in the different list): Viśālākshī (in Vārāṇasī, U.P.); Lingadāriṇī (in Naimisha, modern Nimkhar or Nimsar in the Sitapur district, U.P.); Lalitā (in Prayāga, U.P.); Kāmākshī; Kāmukā or Kāmukī (in Gandhamādana, a Himālayan peak at Badari); Kumudā (in Mānasa, the source of the Sutlej in the Himālayas); Viśvakāyā or Viśvakāmā (in Ambara, modern Amer in Rajasthan); Gomatī (in Gomanta, i.e. Goa region); Kāmachāriṇī (in Mandar, the Mandara hill in Bhagalpur district, Bihar); Madotkaṭā (in Chaitraratha, location uncertain); Jayantī

¹Cf. Phal, U.N., 'Virajā-Kşetra—A Śākta Pīţha,' Aruņa Bhāratī, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, pp. 67-76.

(in Hastinapur, U.P.); Gaurī (in Kānyakubja, U.P.); Rambhā (in Malaya mountain); Kīrtimātī (in Ekāmra, modern Bhubaneswar, Orissa); Viśvā or Vilvā (in Viśveśvara, location uncertain); Puruhutā Rajasthan); Mārgadāyinī (in Kedāra, in (in Pushkara, Himālayas); Nandā or Mandā (in the Himālayas); Bhadrakarņikā or Bhadrakālikā (in Gokarņa, modern Gendia near Goa); Bhavānī (in Sthānesvara, modern Thanesar); Vilvapatrikā (in Vilvakā, mythical); Mahādevī (in Śrīśaila, in Karnool district, Andhra Pradesh); Bhadrā or Bhadreśvarī (in Bhadreśvara, in Hooghly district, West Bengal); Jaya (in Varahasaila, either Baramula in Kashmir or Barachatra in Nepal); Kamalā (in Kamalālaya, mythical); Rudrāņī or Kalyaņī (in Rudrakoţi, either the tīrtha of this name in Kurukshetra, or that near the source of Narmada); Kali (in Kālañjara, Banda district, U.P.); Kapilā (in Mahalinga, Kota, possibly Mukuteśvari or Mangaleśvari (in mythical); Kotatīrtha Śalagrama, at the at Kālañjara); Mahādevī (in source of the river Gandaki or Gandak); Jalapriya (in Śivalińga, mythical); Kumārī (in Māyāpurī, in the Hardwar region); Lalitā, Santāna, mythical); Utpalā (in Sahasrāksha, mythical); Mahotpalā (in Hiraņyāksha, mythical); Mangalā (in Gayā); Vimalā (in Purusottama, Puri in Orissa); Amoghākshī (in Vipāśā, modern Beas, a tributary of the Indus); Pāṭalā Pundravardhana, modern Mahasthan in Bogra district, Bangladesh); Nārāyaṇī (in Supārśva, mythical); Bhadrasundarī or Rudrasundarī (in Trikūţa, the mythical peak of Ceylon or Trikūţa in northern Konkan or a hill of the same name in Deogarh); Vipulā (in Vipulā, mythical); Kalyāṇī (in Malayāchala, southern part of the Western Ghats); Kotavī (in Kotitīrtha, location uncertain); Sugandhā (in Mādhavavana, probably the same as Madhuvana or Mathurā); Trisandhyā (on the Godāvarī); Ratipriyā (in Gangādvāra, same as Hardwar); Sivanandā (in Sivakunda, mythical); Nandinī (on the Devikā, modern Deeg in Punjab); Rukminī (in Dvārāvatī, modern Dwarka, Kathiawar); Rādhā (in Vṛndāvana); Devakī (in Mathurā); mythical); Sītā (in Chitrakūța, in Parameśvari (in Pātāla, Bundelkhand or less probably Chittor); Vindhyavāsinī (in the Vindhyas); Ekavīrā (on the Sahyādri or the Western Ghats); Chandrikā (in Hariśchandra, mythical); Ramanā (in Rāmatīrtha, Thana district, Maharashtra or Rāmagiri, modern Ramtek near Nagpur); Mṛgāvatī (on the Yamunā); Mahālakshmī (in Karavīra, Kolhapur in Maharashtra); Umā (in Vināyaka, one of the eight

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Vināyaka tīrthas in Maharashtra); Ārogā (in Vaidyanātha, Deogarh-Vaidyanatham in Bihar); Māheśvarī (in Mahākāla, Ujjain); Abhayā (in the Ushna or Pushpatīrtha, possibly connected with Pushpagiri in the Malaya range); Amṛtā (in the Vindhyan cave); Māṇḍavī (in Maṇḍavya, modern Mandor in Rajasthan); Svāhā (in Maheśvarapura, modern Maheśvara in M.P.); Prachaņḍā (in Chāgalāṇḍa, mythical); Chaṇḍikā (in Amarakaṇṭaka, M.P.); Someśvara, possibly Somnath in Kathiawar); Varārohā (in Pushakarāvatī (in Prabhāsa, same as Somnath); Devamātā (on the Sarasvatī); Mātā (on the bank of the Pārā); Mahābhāgā (in Mahālaya, same as Omkāreśvara, or Amareśvara); Pingaleśvarī (on the Payoshnī, the river Paisuni, tributary of Yamunā); Simhikā (in Kitāśaucha, mythical); Yaśaskarī (in Kārttikeya, possibly modern Baijnath, Kumaon district, U.P.); Lolā (in Utpalāvartaka, in Tinnevelly district or Utpalāvata, modern Bithoor, U.P.); Subhadrā (on the confluence of the Son and the Ganga near Patna); Mātā Lakshmī (in Siddhapur either Siddhaur near Barabanki or Sidpur about sixtyfour miles from Ahmedabad); Anganā (in Bharatāśrama, mythical); Viśvamukhī (in Jālandhara, in the Punjab); Tārā (on the Kishkindhyā hill, in Andhra Pradesh, or modern Kekind in Jodhpur); Pushți (in Devadaruvana, in the Himalayas or modern Aundh in the Deccan); Medhā (in Kashmira); Bhimā (on the Himālayas); Pushți or Tushți (in Vastreśvara, possibly the same as Vastrāpatha or Girnar in Kathiawar); Suddhi (in Kapalamochana, identification uncertain); Mātā (in Kāyāvarohaņa, Karvan in Borada); Dhvani (in Sankhoddhara, the island of Bate or Beyt in the Gulf of Kutch); Dhṛti (in Piṇḍāraka, near Dwarkā); Kalā (on the Chandrabhāgā, or Chenab); Śivakāriņī (in Achchhoda, modern Achchhavat in Kashmir); Amṛtā (on the Beṇā, a tributary of the Kṛshṇā); Urvaśī (in Badari, Badrinath U.P.); Oshadhi (in Uttarakuru, mythical); Kuśodakā (in Kuśadvīpa, one of the seven mythical dvīpas); somewhere in the Himālayas); Hemakūta, Manmathā (in Satyavādinī (in Mukuṭā, mythical); Vandanīya (in Aśvattha, mythical); Nidhi (in the home of Vaiśravana, imaginary); Gāyatrī (in Grammar, imaginary); Pārvatī (in the company of Šiva, imaginary); Indrānī (in the world of gods, imaginary); Prabhā (in (among Divine Mothers, solar orb, imaginary); Vaishnavī imaginary); Arundhati (Among chaste women, imaginary); Tilottamā (among beautiful girls, imaginary); Brahmakalā (in the hearts of

men, imaginary) and Sakti (in the living beings, imaginary).

The names of some of the presiding deities of the various Pīthas are mythical but many of these deities were obviously local goddesses. Later on, the Puranas invented the story of the death of Satī, wife of Siva and the falling of her limbs in different places to bring all these goddesses within the orbit of one cult. The Mbh. and the earlier Puranas make no mention of Sati's death. The later Purāņas however relate that Daksha, the father of Satī, did not invite Siva to his sacrifice, and this humiliation led her to destroy her body. At this Siva became so inconsolable that he took her dead body on his shoulders and travelled aimlessly. In order to save him from this madness, Vishnu cut off the dead body of Satī piece by piece. Parts of her body thus fell at different places which came to be known as Sakti Pithas. It is also said that the deep love of Siva for his wife made him to keep guard over her remains in all these places, that is shrines of Siva were built not far from those of Sakti. The Chinese pilgrim Yuan Chwang refers to the worship of the goddess Bhīmādevī, the spouse of Maheśvara, in her natural likeness. According to J.N. Banerjea it probably alludes to the aniconic form of the object of worship representing the various limbs. It also indicates that the Pīthapūjā concept was already much in vogue in the middle of the seventh century.1

Concept of Matrganas

Another device by which a number of goddesses were brought within the fold of one sect was the concept of the Mātṛgaṇas or Divine Mothers. In the historic period the number of the divine mothers is often given as eight, nine or sixteen, but originally they appear to have been counted as seven (Saptamātṛkā), their names being usually associated with the gods of the Hindu pantheon. They are Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, Kaumārī, Vaishṇavī, Vārāhī, Indrāṇī and Chāmuṇḍī. In the Devīmāhātmya account of the fight of the Devī with the asuras the number of the Mātṛkās is given as 9, by the addition of two names Śivadūtī and Nārasimhī.² In some later texts

¹Various texts of the *Pīthanirnaya* have been edited by D.C. Sircar in his Śākta Pīthas in which the names of the Pīthas, Pītha devatās (forms of the goddess), Kshetrādhīśas (Bhairavas) and Devī's angàpratyangas (limbs including ornaments, etc.) have been arranged in tabular form, and the discrepancies occurring in the various sources are indicated.

²Banerjea, PTR, p. 125.

the number rises to 16 with Gauri in the beginning (Gauryādisho-daśa-mātrkā).

In the Mbh. we come across numerous Mātṛkās associated with Skanda. They had access in Jainism and other religious systems also. In the Purāṇas they are regarded as the offshoots of the goddess Kauśikī or Chaṇḍikā. Some of them like Vaishṇavī, Kālikā, etc., are often identified with Devī herself.

There are different versions of the origin of the Matrkas in the Purānas. According to one myth when Siva's spear pierced the heart of the demon Andhaka, each drop of the latter's blood created a demon. This made Siva highly angry and from his body emerged the goddess Yogesvarī, and at the same time Vaishņavī, Brahmāņī, Kaumārī, Indrāņī, Māheśvarī, Chamuņdā and Vārāhī emanated from the bodies of Vishņu, Brahmā, Kumāra, Indra, Maheśvara, Yama and Varāha respectively. They drank and drained all the blood that fell from Andhaka's body. According to another myth when Sumbha sent Raktabīja to fight against Devī, the latter uttered a fearful war-cry and Brahmānī, Māheśvarī, Vaishnavī, Kaumārī, Vārāhī and Nārasimhī emerged out of her mouth. The seventh, namely Chāmuṇḍā, had already emerged from Devi's body when the latter was engaged in war with Ruru, a general of Sumbha. Each drop of blood that fell from the body of Raktabīja was drunk by Chāmuṇḍā alone. The Varāha P. says that Yogeśvarī is the symbol of lust, Māheśvarī of anger, Vaishnavi of greed, Kaumāri of attachment, Brahmāņi of pride, Aindrī of jealousy, Chāmuṇḍā of depravity and Vārāhī of envy.

The iconographic features of the various Mātṛkās resemble those of the gods they represent. Brahmāṇī is four-armed and four-headed, has swan as her vāhana and bears a rosary and a waterpot from which she sprinkles water with kuśa. Māheśvarī is seated on a bull and wears a jaṭāmukuṭa and a crescent. Kaumārī is red-coloured and four-armed, carries a śakti and is seated on a mayūra (peacock). Vaishṇavī resembles Vishṇu and Vārāhī a boar. The vehicle of the latter is the buffalo and she is armed with a club and a wheel. Indrāṇī or Aindrī is many-eyed, golden-coloured and carries a thunderbolt, a spear and a club, her vāhana being the elephant. Chāmuṇḍā is three-eyed, fleshless and bony, is clad in tiger-skin and is seated on a corpse.

The worship of the divine mothers was very intimately

associated with the Tantrika form of Sakti worship. The Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D. speaks of a worshipper of Vishnu building a temple full of Dakinis in honour of the Divine Mothers 'who utter tremendous shouts in joy and stir up the oceans, with the mighty wind rising from the magic rites of their religion.' The Bihar stone pillar record¹ of Skandagupta mentions the Divine Mothers and a Deogarh inscription of about the sixth century A.D. refers to an early temple of the Divine Mothers. The Matrgana or 'the group of the Divine Mothers' is mentioned in the records of the early Kadamba kings who claimed to have been favoured by the god Mahāsena (Skanda-Kārttikeya) and the Divine Mothers. early Chālukvas of Bādāmī are also stated to have been nourished by the Seven Mothers described as Saptalokamatr, meaning 'the Seven Mothers of mankind', or 'the Mothers of the Seven Worlds.' Apparently the same Matrmandala is referred to in the passage Matṛṇām loka-maṭṛṇām maṇḍalam occurring in a sixth century inscription from Udayagiri (Jhansi District, U.P.) recording the construction and consecration of a temple of the Divine Mothers.

The Brhatsamhitā (LX. 19) of Varāhamihira also refers to the worship of the Divine Mothers by the Maṭṛ-maṇḍalavidāḥ or maṇḍala-krama-vidāḥ. The first of the two variant readings means 'those who know fully the circle of the Divine Mothers', while, the other reading means 'those who know fully the traditional rules of worship.' In all these cases the reference seems to be to the collective worship of these divinities.

Chapter 12

Saktism (ii)

Šakti Principle in Saivism

Saktivada made its greatest impact on and had the most intimate alliance with Saivism because Sakti and Siva are generally looked upon as either identical with or complementary of each other.1 We have already seen how from the religious and philosophical points of view Sakti worship is an integral part of Saivism. Philosophically, the various schools of Saivism have different theories of the Siva-Sakti relationship. Vīrasaivism, for example, envisages an integral association between Siva and Sakti, Śaktiviśishtādvaitavāda. Kashmir Saivism, on the other hand, based its doctorines on the Vedanta philosophy which emphasizes that māyā is the Śakti of Brahman (Śiva). This Sakti, mainly divided into five categories—chit (the power of intellegence), ananda (the power of bliss), ichchhā (the power of will), jñāna (the power of knowledge) and kriyā (the power of action)—is the faminine aspect of Siva. With the opening out of Sakti the universe originates, and with her closing, it dissolves. A section of Kaśmira Saivas however developed the theory of Saktyadvayavada according to which Sakti is not different from Siva and the material world is the parinama or consequence of Sakti. As we have already seen, Somananda criticized this view for its emphasis on Sakti as the only substance (p. 277 ff.).

The Śaiva-Siddhāntins look upon Śiva as the operative cause and Śakti (māyā) as the material cause of the world. On the basis of the satkāryavāda of Sāmkhya they believe that the material world must have a material cause, and the constituents of this cause cannot be qualitatively different from those of the effect.

¹Cf. CA, p. 446.

The Ardhanarisvara Concept

Siva and Parvati cults drew closer to each other until their merger is symbolically represented by the Ardhanarisvara concept in which the two deities form two halves of one body. On the philosophical plane this is a creative union of the active and passive principles. The Ardhanārīśvara aspect of Siva is described in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the Mbh. (XIII.14.298-313). In Yama and Yami of the RV we have a primeval bisexual pair. There are many other pairs of bisexual character, and usually they are regarded as creator divinties. Therefore, as pointed out by S. Bhattacharji, for Siva and Parvati this was a step towards their rise to the rank of the primordial pair and also to that of prime creators. As in mythology Siva was assigned the specific task of destruction, "his stature would be merely negative if he was not shown to be the creator as well. Here Parvatī, Jagajjananī (the mother of the universe) became his indispensable helpmate, and with her firmly implanted within his being the task became easier. Siva in his Ardhanārī śvara personality was a very late mythological embodiment of the primordial bisexual creative principle".1

Śākta influence on Vaishņavism

Though seemingly Śāktism is unconnected with Vaishņavism, yet in fact the former influenced the latter tremendously. In its wider sense Śāktism represents the cult of female deities. From this point of view, its earliest gift to Vaishņavism was Śrī-Lakshmī (Ch. 8, pp. 223-30). This consort of Vishņu is identical with Kamalā, the tenth and last of the Daśamahāvidyās, the ten manifestations of the consort of Śiva. Sarasvatī provides another link that connects Vaishṇavism with the cult of Śakti. Even after her affiliation with Vaishṇavism, she was identified with Bhadrakālī, one of the forms of Durgā. A third link is furnished by the Earth Goddess, Bhūdevī or Mahīdevī, who figures prominently as a wife of Vishṇu.

There are passages in the Mārkaṇdeya P. and the Devībhāgavata which describe the goddess as Vishņumāyā or Vaishņavī (the śakti

¹Bhattacharji, The Indian Theogony, p. 177.

²Raychaudhuri, B.C., 'Links Between Vaishnavism and Saktism', SCT, pp. 40-44.

³ Ibid., p. 43.

or energy of Vishnu) and Nārāyaṇī (the śakti of Nārāyaṇa) and yoganidrā. From the Prapañchasāratantra and the Gautamīya tantra, it becomes evident that most forms of Vishnu have Śaktis corresponding to them. In addition to the Vishnu Śaktis emanating from the letters of the alphabet, there are goddesses called Kalās coming from the same source. These Kalās appear in the Gautamīya tantra with such attributes that give them form and individuality.

Influence of female deities is specially manifest in the Kṛshṇa cult. In the Durgastotras of the Mbh. the goddess is described as the 'younger sister of Kṛshṇa', 'eldest-born in the family of the cowherd Nanda', 'born in the womb of Yaśodā', 'the favourite of Nārāyaṇa', 'the consort of Nārāyaṇa', etc.2 The goddess that assisted Kṛshṇa bears the name Ekānamśā. A goddess of the same name is represented in the Matsya P. as well as the Kumārikā Khanda of the Skanda P. as an emanation from Parvatī. The two Ekānamsas are obviously identical with each other and with Durgā. The introduction of Durga in the legends of Kṛshṇa was the result of the desire of Vaishnavism to ally itself with her cult. According to B.C. Raychaudhuri the manner of Durgā's representation in the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira reminds us of Kṛshṇa's sister Subhadrā. He therefore suggests that the cult of Subhadrā was superimposed on that of Durgā.3

The Gopī element in Vaishnavism is met with in the *Bhāgavata* and devotional songs of the Āļvārs. Āṇḍāl or Koḍai, the daughter of Periyāļvār regarded herself as a gopī of Kṛshṇa. From this developed in the early medieval period the concept of Rādhā (Ch. 8, p. 233-4). Though Madhva (thirteenth century), the founder of the Dvaita school, did not favour the conception of Kṛshṇa attended by Rādhā and, following Rāmānuja he conceived of Brahman and his Śakti in the forms of Vishṇu (Nārāyaṇa) and Lakshmī (Śrī) residing in heaven, yet the Rādhā concept was adopted and developed by the followers of Nimbārka, and later by those of Vallabha and Chaitanya. The followers of Vallabha sometimes dress and act like women.

¹ Ibid.

²Bhattacharya, N.N., IMG, p. 215.

³Raychaudhuri, op. cit., p. 41.

The influence of Tantrika Saktivada on Vaishnavism as early as the Gupta age is evidenced by the Gangdhar inscription mentioned above. According to the Lakshmītantra, a Pāñcharātra text compiled some time between the ninth and twelfth centuries. Lakshmī as an integral part of Nārāyaṇa, the Supreme Being, is the embodiment of His sovereign will, and the instrumental cause of all This text also sets down a full record of exclusive Saktiupāsanā within the framework of Pāncharātra religion. It describes her as performing five functions: tirodhāna or delusion; sṛshṭi or creation; sthiti or sustenance; laya or dissolution; and anugraha or grace. These are also called her five śaktis as they sum up the different ways in which she exercises her power of action (kriyāśakti).1

In Bengal a section of the Vaishnavas developed the Sahajiyā In Sahajiyā Vaishņavism, Krshņa and Rādhā, like Šiva and Sakti, or Upāya and Prajñā, symbolise the Male and Female Principles. The Sahajiya sect "records nothing but the spirit and practices of the earlier Buddhist and Hindu Tantric cults, of course in a distinctly transformed form wrought through the evolution of centuries in different religious and cultural environments." The Mainamati plates (13th century) speak of the existence of the Sahajiyā cult in Tripurā. Chaṇḍīdāsa (14th century) was probably a Vaishņava Sahajiyā and in his Śrīkṛshṇakīrtana we can trace some of the fundamental doctrines of this sect.2

Tārā and other Goddesses in Buddhism

The gods and goddesses of early Buddhism were borrowed from the existing religious systems of India. The Buddhist Siri-Lakkhī for example, was conceptually a combination of Brahmanical Lakshmī and Sarasvatī since she is also a goddess of wisdom. There is also a separate goddess called Sarasvatī. The Chulavamsa mentions Vīralakkhī, the goddess who gives success to warriors.3

¹For the place of Lakshmi in Śrivaishnavism vide Billorey, R.K., 'Laksmi in Srivaisnava Theology', in Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 110 ff.

²Cf. Goyal, S.R., 'Kṛshna Bhakti kā eka Akhyāta Sampradāya Sahajayāna', Bhāratī, Bombay, July 1964, VIII, xxiii, p. 50 ff.

³Bhattacharya, IMG, p. 111.

In Mahāyānism, the goddesses came to exert an ever-increasing influence. Most of them were mere abstractions of some ideas, for the Buddhists deified almost all objects, cosmic and philosophical principles, literature, letters of the alphabet, directions and even the desires into gods and goddesses, with forms, colour, poses and weapons.¹

The conceptions of Sūnyatā and Karunā of Mahāyāna Buddhism later developed into those of Prajñā and Upāya in Tāntrika Buddhism. Prajñā and Upāya symbolized the Female and Male Principles respectively. Prajñā is viewed as a goddess (Bhagavatī). In some Buddhist Tantras, a beautiful girl of sixteen adopted for sādhanā, is styled Prajñā. Elsewhere Prajñā denotes the female organ, which is the seat of mahāsukha. Upāya and Prajñā are also called thunder (vajra) and the lotus (padma) respectively, the former symbolizing the male organ (maṇi, linga) and the latter, the female yoni.²

As a result of the influence of Śāktism the Ādi Buddha of the Vajrayāna group found a consort in Prajñāpāramitā known by many other names. His emanations, the Dhyānī Buddhas, also obtained a divine consort or Śakti of his own. Later Buddhism is, in fact, nothing but a disguised Tāntrika cult of the Female principle.

Tārā is the most popular goddess of the Buddhist pantheon. She holds the same place in Buddhism which the goddess Durgā has in Brāhmaṇism. The Buddhists consider Tārā to be the great Mother Goddess, the symbol of primordial female energy and the consort of Avalokiteśvara, the symbol of the primordial male principle, just as Durgā is conceived as the consort of Śiva. She is 'the mother of all the Buddhas and Boddhisattvas'. Derived from the root tar, Tārā is the name of the goddess who makes others, i.e., the devotees, cross the sea or ocean. She enables her devotees to surmount all sorts of dangers and calamities. A mere prayer to this goddess is sure to remove the eight mahābhayas (great dangers).

On the basis of his study of the Sādhanamālā B. Bhattacharya has prepared a list of 24 forms of Tārā. According to S.K.

¹¹bid., p. 114.

^{*}For details vide RHAI, I, p. 346 ff.

Dasgupta, K.K., 'Iconography of Tārā', SCT, pp. 115-2.

Saraswati Buddhist texts enumerate nearly 100 varieties of Tārā. That there were at least 108 names of Tara current among the Buddhists would be evident from the stotra styled Aryātārābhattarikānāma-ashļottara šatakastotra.1

In the Māñjuśrīmūlakalpā Tārā occurs in her various forms like Bhrkuți, Lochana, Śveta, Pandaravāsini, Sutārā, etc. From the seventh century onwards, we find the exuberance of Tarastotras (e.g. the Sārangdhara-stotras composed in praise of Tārā by the eighth century Kashmiri poet Sarvajñamitra). According to the Sammohatantra, Nīlasarasvatī or Ugratārā was born in a lake called Chola on the Western side of the Meru which was included in the Chinadesa. We come across five varieties of Tārā, classified according to colour-green, white, yellow, blue and red.

The Buddhists also knew Tara as a serpent-goddess under the name of Janguli. She was a near approach, iconographically speaking, to the Jaina goddess Padmāvatī. Jangulī is said to be as old as the Buddha himself who is said to have given to Ananda the secret mantra for her worship. Of the eight kinds of 'fear' which are dispelled by Tārā, to which fact she owes her name, the fear from serpents is one.2

D.C. Bhattacharya has drawn the attention of scholars to a Buddhist goddess named Mahāmāyāvijayavahinī who was conceived as a fierce aspect of the supreme goddess Tara.3

Hirananda Sastri and B. Bhattacharya have attempted to show that the cult of Tara must have been Buddhist not Brahmanical, and also foreign, in origin.4 Sastri believes that the Tara worship originated somewhere towards Ladakh and that she came to India via Nepal. Sylvain Lévi agrees, on the authority of the Tārātantra and some other Sanskrit works, that the worship of Tara and the Tāntrika vāmāchāra practices came from China. P.C. Bagchi also insists on the Chinese and Tibetan influences on the Buddhist and Brāhmanical Tantras.6 Joseph Needham has also concluded

¹*Ibid.*, p. 121.

Bhattacharya, A.K., 'Tārā as a Serpent Deity and its Jain Counterpart Padmāvatī', SCT, pp. 152-68.

Bhattacharya, D.C., 'An Unknown Form of Tārā', SCT, pp. 134-42.

^{*}MASI, XX, p. 12.

⁵Lévi, Le Nepal, I, p. 346 f.

Bagchi, Studies in Tantras, pp. 46-55.

that Tantrikism was "really Taoist". But opponents of this ' theory² point out that (a) Tāriņī and Tārā as names of the Devi appear in the Mbh. and the Brahmanda P. (XXXI.12). (b) The Buddhist Tārā is almost exactly similar to that of the Brāhmaņical Durgā, the hoary antiquity of which is now a proven fact. (c) Parņaśabarī, a comparatively late form of Tārā, is clearly reminiscent of the description of the Hindu Devi as 'deity worshipped by the Sabaras, Barbaras or Pulindas' in the HV (supra). Tārā thus appears to be a Buddhist form of the Hindu Devi Durgā. (d) A number of early representations of Tārā are found in the Buddhist caves of the Western Deccan. But there is nothing in them to show that their artists either themselves came from the Indo-Tibetan borderlands or consciously illustrated a foreign deity in Indian garb, at places so much distant from the Indo-Tibetan borderlands. (e) A large number of the elements of Tantrikism are found in the Vedic literature itself.3 To us Sircar also seems to be right when he asserts that Tārā was originally worshipped by some aboriginal people (probably of Eastern India) and was adopted in both the Brahmanical and Buddhist pantheons in the early centuries of the Christian era. However in course of time several goddesses, including a few Mongoloid ones, merged in her.4 It is also possible that she was originally a goddess who was conceived as dwelling among stars (cf. Persian Sitārā, Greek Aster, Latin Stella and English 'star' and also the names of such foreign goddesses as Ishtar, Astarte, Atargatis, Astaroth, etc). Many such streams seem to have later culminated in the conception of Tārā whose cult was established in different parts of India by the sixth century A.D.

Goddesses in Jainism

The Mother Goddess of other Indian sects found her way into Jainism quite easily. Jaina texts like the *Uttarādhyayana Sūtra*, Āchāra Dinakara etc. show in their classification of Jaina goddesses that many of them were adaptation from the existing non-Jaina cults.

¹Quoted by N.N. Bhattacharya in 'Chinese Origin of the Cult of Tara', SCT, pp. 143-4.

²Cf. RHAI, I, p. 33 f.

⁸ Thid

Sircar, D.C., 'The Tara of Candradvipa', SCT, pp. 128-33.

The Āchāra Dinakara mentions three classess of Jaina goddesses—prasādadevīs (goddess of general nature), sampradāya-devīs (sectarian goddesses) and kula-devīs (Tāntrika goddesses). The last category includes goddesses like Kaṅkālī, Kālī, Mahākālī, Chāmuṇḍā, Jvālāmukh, Kāmākhyā, Kapālinī, Bhadrakālī, Durgā, Lalitā, Gaurī, Sumaṅgalā, Rohiṇī, Sulakatā, Tripura Kurukulla, Chandrāvatī, Yamaghaṇṭā, etc. In his Abhidhānachintāmaṇi Hemachandra mentions cults of sixteen Śruta or Vidyādevīs, of eight Mothers such as Brahmāṇī, Māheśvarī, etc., of the mothers of Tīrthaṁkaras such as Marudevī, Vijayā, etc., and of Śrī or Lakshmī and a host of other goddesses.¹ Śrī or Lakshmī has a prominent place in Jaina literature. The cult of the sixty-four Yoginīs was also adopted by Jainism.

The cult of the Yakshinis also became an important feature of Jainism. In the Jaina texts they are sometimes described as female attendants (Sāsanadevatās) of the Tīrthamkaras and sometimes as leaders of the women converts. They are endowed with semi-divine attributes and symbolism of various kinds.²

Archaeological Evidence for the Popularity of Śakti Worship

The combined testimony of literature, archaeology, epigrapy and numismatics reveal the extent of the popularity of Śāktism in ancient India. To take the archaeological evidence first. Not much can be said about the post-Harappan images of the Mother Goddess till the advent of the Maurya period. One headless image of Mother Goddess was found from Inamgaon near Poona which has been assigned to c. 1200 B.C.³ A small gold tablet, representing a naked woman was dug out near Lauriya Nandangarh. It was identified by Bloch as an iconic representation of Pṛthivī and was ascribed by him to about the 8th or 7th century B.C.⁴ A small gold tablet, similar to that one, was found at Lauriya and a small gold figure was discovered from the Piprahwa stūpa, belonging to a period not earlier than the Mauryan. These survivals and also some of the oldest terracotta pieces recovered by Marshall from the

¹Bhattacharya, N.N., IMG, p. 110.

Cf. Goyal, RHAI, I, p. 180 f.

³Bhattacharya, N.N., IMG, p. 153.

[·] Ibid.

ruins of Bhita prove the continuity of the Mother Goddess cult in

the post-Harappan period.

The female deity of the Lauriya Piprahwa type is also seen on the ring stones which have been found at Rupar, Taxila Purana Qila (Indraprastha), Bhita, Kara, Kauśāmbī, Jhūsī, Rājghāt, Mathurā, Saṅkisā, Vaiśālī and Patna. These are also assigned to the Maurya-Suṅga period. According to Banerjea, these circular discs with female figures may be regarded as the forerunners of the jantras of the later Tāntrika cult.¹

A study of the extant Yaksha and Yakshini images shows that the later images of the gods and goddesses were shaped after them.² Of the earliest Yakshini sculptures mention must be made of the Alakamandā and Sudarśanā Yakshinis of Bharhut and also to their Buddhistic partners, Sirimā Devatā and Chulakokā Davatā, belonging to the first century B.C. Sudarśanā stands on a makara. Sirimā Devatā was adopted by the Buddhists from the Brāhmanical Śrī or Lakshmī whose images have been found at Bharhut, Sāñchī, Bodh Gayā, Kauśāmbī, Pitalkhora and many other places. Analogous figurines have been discovered at Ahichchhhatrā, Hastinapur, Saraimohana and Masaon near Vārāṇasī, Kauśāmbī and Vaiśālī.³ On a Bharhut pillar of the Śunga age a female standing figure is shown playing a harp. It may represent Sarasvatī.⁴ In this connection the occurrence of the figures Lakshmī and Gajalakshmī on early Indians coins may also be recalled.⁵

The cult of a nude goddess having Roman-Egyptian influence is represented in terracotta plaques of the Kushāṇa age found from Bhita, Kauśāmbī and Jhusi. Parthian influence on Śāktism is seen in the terracotta votive tanks enshrining a female deity surrounded by birds and musicians. These votive tanks are found from various sites such as Ahichchhatrā, Hastinapur, Sirkap, etc. On a miniature relief from Mathurā belonging to the Kushāṇa period a fusion of the male and female deities (Ardhanārīśvara) which became popular in later ages, is noticed.

1 Ibid.

Banerjea, DHI, p. 171.

Bhattacharya, op. cit., pp. 154-6.

6Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 156. 7Sinha, op. cit., p. 53 f.

^{&#}x27;Sinha, B.P., 'Evolution of the Sakti Worship in India', SCT, pp. 45-55.

Bandyopadhyays, Gajalaksmī on Early Indian Coins', in Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 91 ff.

Some of the finest sculptures of the Gupta and later periods depict Vaishnava, Śaiva, Buddhist and Jaina goddesses. Images of popular river goddesses like Gangā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, etc., are also found. But it was the Mahishamardinī form of Durgā that became the most popular. However, the carliest representation of the Mahishamardinī form of the goddess found so far is probably a first century B.C. terracotta plaque from Nagar in Tonk district, Rajasthan, now preserved in the Amber Museum. Six statues of the Kushāna age, preserved in the Mathurā Museum, appear to contain some other early representations of the Mahishamardinī form.¹

Literary, Numismatic and Epigraphic Evidence for the Popularity of Saktism

References to various goddesses in secular Sanskrit literature are quite numerous. The Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa relates the stories of the birth of Kumāra or Kārttikeya through the union of Siva and Pārvatī; of the resurrection of Satī, the first wife of Siva, as Umā; of her penances to win her husband again; of the burning of Kāmadeva; of the marriage of Siva and Pārvatī etc. In the Vikramorvaśīva of Kālidāsa, Lakshmī and Sarasvatī are rivals of each other. In the Kāmasūtra Vātsyāyana informs that wealthy citizens used to flock every fortnight to the temple of Sarasvatī to enjoy dramatic performances, etc. Kālī is referred to in the Raghuvamsa and in the Kumārasambhava and is described as the Divine Mother. The earliest reference to a Buddhist worshipper of Tārā is found in Subandhu's Vāsavadattā. Šiva and Umā are mentioned in the Kirātārjunīya of Bhāravī. In his Kādambarī Bāņa describes the goddess cult of the wild Sabaras and in his Harshacharita refers to the destructive character of the goddess. The Gaudavaho of Vakpati (c.725 A.D.) describes the awe-inspiring atmosphere of the temple of the goddess Vindhyavāsinī, who was worshipped by the Sabaras with human sacrifice. Kathāsaritsāgara refers many a times to human sacrifices before the goddess. In the Rāmacharita of Sandhyākaranandin mention is made of the festivities associated with the worship of Umā. The Kālaviveka of Jīmūtavāhana describes the obscene festivals

Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 162 f.

connected with the Sakti cult. The Devisataka of Anandavardhana of Kashmir mentions the popularity of the Mother Goddess cult in that region. Reference may also be made in this connection to the Saundaryalahari, the well-known ode to the goddess, attributed to Sankara.

Now the epigraphic and numismatic evidence. The popularity of goddess Śrī-Lakshmī, as we noted in an earlier chapter, is indicated by her appearance in the Gajalakshmī and other forms on early Indian coins, such as the inscribed issues of Kauśāmbī and Ujjayinī, the coins of some early rulers of Ayodhyā and Mathurā and of the Śaka Satraps of Mathurā and those of Pantaleon, Agathocles, Maues and Azilises. The representation of Lakshmī is found also on the coins of the Imperial Guptas and some of their successors. The post-Gupta issues of Jayanāga and Samāchāradeva depict Lakshmī on the reverse. The so-called imitation Gupta coins in debased gold from the various places in East Pakistan bear on the reverse the figure of an eight- or six-armed goddess.

Śrī-Lakshmī and Durgā-Pārvatī etc are mentioned in a large number of inscriptions of the Gupta and post-Gupta periods. The Gangdhar inscription of 423 speaks of a temple full of Dākinīs. It was built in the honour of the Divine Mothers. The Mandasaur stone pillar inscription of Yośodharman mentions Kshitidharatanayā which evidently refers to Umā or Pārvatī.¹ The Khoh copper plate inscription of Samkshobha records the installation of a temple for the goddess Pishtapurī and an endowment for its maintenance. Her name also occurs in two copper plates of Śarvanātha. The Nagarjuni hill cave inscription of Anantavarman Maukhari records the installation in the cave of an image representing Śiva and Pārvatī. Another Nagarjuni hill cave inscription of the same king refers to the goddess Pārvatī under the names of Kātyāyanī and Bhayānī and stresses upon her Mahishamardinī form.

Regional Distribution of Śāktism

The Sakti cult had a very long and popular career in Orissa. The temples of Mohinī, Kapālinī and Gaurī at Bhubaneswar, Vimalā at Purī, Kīchakeśvarī at Khiching, Virajā at Jājpur, Mangalā at Kakatpur, Ugratārā at Bhusandapur, Vārāhī at Chaurasi, Saralā

¹Goyal, S.R., Guptakālina Abhilekha, p. 336.

at Jhankad, Solapuamā and Chandī at Cuttack, Sapta-Mātrkā at Belkhandi in Kalahandi and Samalesvari at Sambalpur show the wide distribution of the cult in the different corners of this region.1 In a Kalahandi copper plate grant (c. 5th or 6th century A.D.) King Tushtikara of Orissa is mentioned as a worshipper of the goddess Stambheśvarī, the family goddess of the Sulkīs. The same goddess is mentioned in the grants of the Bhañjas and Tungas who ruled over different parts of Orissa from the 8th to the 11th century A.D.2 From the Banpur copper plates of the Somavamśī king Indraratha (first half of the eleventh century) it appears that the cult of Tara was also very popular there.

The Sakti cult flourished in Assam and Bengal, more than anywhere else. The Nausari plates of the Rāshtrakūța Govinda III (794-814 A.D.) refer to the great veneration in which the goddess Tārā was held by the Pāla kings of eastern India. They show that the Pala standard or banner bore the representation of goddess Tārā. Kāmarūpa finds a prominent place in all the early accounts of the four Sakta Pithas, and in the Kalika P. account of the seven Pīthas no less than three are located in Kāmarūpa, the seat of the goddess Kāmākhyā.3

That there was a pronounced Tantrika element in the Mother-Goddess cult of Western India is clear from the Gangdhar inscription of 423 A.D. mentioned above. In this the temple of the Mothers is described as a terrible abode full of Pākinīs or female ghouls (dakini-samprakirna) and the goddesses themselves are represented as uttering loud and tremendous shouts of joy and stirring up the very oceans with the winds rising from the tantrika rites (pramudita-ghan-ātyartha-nihrādinī and tantrod-bhūta-prabalapavan-odvartit-āmbhonidhi).4

In Rajasthan Sakti worship is at least as old as the first century A.D. The ancient site of Nagar has yielded a few terracotta plaques of Mahishāsuramardinī (now in the Museum of Amber) of the 1st century A.D. From Rairh are found a very

Ibid.

¹Behara, K.C., 'The Evolution of Sakti Cult at Jājpur, Bhubaneswar and Puri', SCT, pp. 74-86.

³Lahiri, Bela, 'Sakti Cult and Coins of North-Eastern India', SCT, pp. 34-9; Thakur, Upendra, 'Tantric Cult in Eastern India', in Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1972, p. 112 ff.

^{&#}x27;Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 347.

large number of nude and semi-nude Mother Goddesses. Sambhar has yielded a terracotta plaque (of white clay) of Mahishāsuramardinī, believed to be of the 1st century A.D.¹ In an inscription found in the Bhramaramātā temple near Chhoti Sadri dated 491 A.D. the goddess is described as Asura-dāraṇa-tikshṇa-śūlā (holding a sharp spear piercing the Asura, i.e. Mahishāsura) and as simh-ogrā-yukta ratham-āsthita-chaṇḍavegā (moving in terrific speed in a chariot drawn by a fierce lion). According to D.C. Sircar² the second epithet is very significant because in the early sculptures of Mahishamardinī the lion is sometimes absent and, even when present, does not usually figure as drawing a chariot carrying the goddess.

In Rajasthan Šakti is worshipped in the forms of Kālī or Kālakā, Durgā, Chāmuṇḍā, Ashṭabhujā and Ambā. Besides she is worshipped under local names, viz. Karṇimātā, Mokaiamātā, Piplādmātā, Sakiyāmātā, Khokrimātā, Šākambharī, Āśāpurīdevī, Kinsariyā or Kaivasamātā, Khimalmātā, Kailādevī, Sakrāīmātā, Jinamātā, Susānimātā, Dadhimātā, Sīlamātā, Chauthamātā, etc. Šakti was worshipped also in the form of Mātṛkās at Mandor and other places.³ The Rajput dynasties patronized Šāktism outside Rajasthan also. A grant of Vināyakapāla, the Pratihāra king of Kanauj, dated 931 A.D., records that his predecessors Nāgabhaṭa, Bhoja and Mahendrapāla were devout worshippers of Mother Goddess (*Paramabhagavatībhakta*). Even today the Rajputs, both the descendants of the ruling dynasties and the common man, worship her under various local names.

In the Deccan the Sapta-Mātṛkās appear to be the favourite deities of the early Chālukyas. In Tamilnadu, goddess worship is frequently mentioned as early as the Śaṅgama literature. Among the many names of Śakti occurring in early Tamil literature are included Amarī, Kumārī, Gaurī, Śamarī, Śūlī, Nīlī, Aiyaī (Āryā), Śeyyaval, Koṛṭavai, Nallāļ, Kaṇṇi, Śaṅkarī, etc. Of these the name of Kumārī may be taken to indicate her virgin character. The *Periplus* (c. 60-80 A.D.) notes: "Beyond this there is another place called Comari at which are the Cape of the Comari and a harbour; hither come those men who wish to consecrate themselves

^{&#}x27;Majumdar, P.K., 'Sakti Worship in Rajasthan', SCT, pp. 92-100.

²Sircar, D.C., 'Śakti Cult in Western India', SCT, pp. 87-91.

Majumdar, P.K., op. cit., p. 92-3.

^{&#}x27;Mahalingam, T.V., 'The Cult of Sakti in Tamilnad', SCT, pp. 17-33.

for the rest of their lives, and bathe and dwell in celibacy and women also do the same; for it is told that a goddess once dwelt here and bathed". The Mbh. narrates that "as Gauri, she (Durga) is the sister of Vasudeva and in this form she inhabits the southern mountains". 1 Korravai was recognised as Pārvatī, the consort of This is apparent from reference to her in the Perumbanarruppadai and Tirumurugā ruppadai. According to the Tolkāppiyam, Korravai was the goddess of the region of Palai. According to the Silappadikāram peacocks and parrots, fowls, sandal, grains and oblations of rice with flesh and blood were offered to her. Her dance was known as tunangai². The description of the goddess as Āraņyānī or the goddess of forests is found reflected in the description of the Devi as Kānamarselvi in the Ahanānūru. Kādamarśelvi in the Manimekalai. In the Manimekalai she is described as standing with a beggar's bowl alleviating the hunger of the devils.3

The temples for Durgā were built even in the pre-Pallava days, though of perishable material. Pallava sculptures of Durgā are found in the rock-cut caves at Singavaram, Vallam and the Varāhamandapa, Mahishamardinī, Trimūrti and Ādivarāha caves at Mahabalipuram.4

An interesting aspect of the Durga cult in the Far South examplified by extant sculptures of the Pallava period is her marked association with Vishnu. The Silappadikāram calls her Malavarkkilangilai, i.e., the younger sister of Vishnu. As noted by T.V. Mahalingam, the combinations of Mahishamardini with Anantaśayin in the Mahishamardinī cave at Mahabalipuram and the Ranganātha cave at Singavaram, the proximity of Durgā to the shrine of Vishnu in the Trimurti cave, the depiction of her images in closeness with Trivikrama in the Varāhamandapa and Bhūvarāha in the Ādivarāha cave temple, all again at Mahabalipuram, also seem to have some significance.

During the Chola imperialism under Vijayalaya (850-870 A.D.) and Aditya (870-907 A.D.) the cult of Durga continued to flourish.

¹Ibid., p. 18.

²Ibid., p. 20.

Ibid.

^{*}Ibid., p. 22.

^{*}Ibid., p. 24.

The Tiruvalangadu plates of Rājendra Chola state that Vijayālaya constructed at Tanjore a temple for Nisumbhasudanī.

An interesting iconographic attribute of Durgā in Tamilnadu is the association of the stag or buck with her. In the representation of Durgā in the Varāhamandapa and Ādivarāha cave temple at Mahabalipuram and in the Kailāśanātha temple at Kāñchīpuram the stag is shown with the lion.1

Another interesting feature of the Durga worship in the Tamil country during the Pallava and early Chola periods was the offering of flesh from nine parts of the body. This was nothing but religious self-mutilation.

Another aspect of the Sakti cult which was perhaps more popular in Tamilnadu than anywhere else was that of Jyeshihā. She was popularly known as Alakshmi and the elder sister of Lakshmī.2

The story of the deification of a woman named Kannaki into Pattanikadavul, the goddess of chastity, is met with in the Śilappadikāram. This lady destroyed the city of Madurā by fire to avenge the execution of her husband Kovalan. The Kannakī cult was finally absorbed into the Kālī or Bhagavatī cult.3

¹Ibid., p. 26.

²Ibid., p. 29.

³Kapoor, S.N., Śrī Lanka men Hindu Dahrma, Meerut. 1984-85, p. 101 ff.

Chapter 13

The Saura (Solar) Cult

Proto-historic Background

Like most other nations of the world the Indians also worshipped the sun-god from a very early period. Geometric and naturalistic sun symbols (rayed orb of various designs, simple circles, wheel, skirl device, svastika, bull, unicorn, eagle or falcon) are found on the Indus seals and other proto-historic objects, though no anthropomorphic representation of the sun has been found on them so far.¹

Sun Worship in the Vedic Age

In the RV solar gods are the most numerous. We have Sūrya, Savitr, the Aśvins, Mitra, Vivasvān, Vishņu, Bhaga, Aryaman, Pūshan, Āditya and the goddesses Ushas and Sūryā. Not all of them are given distinct individuality, but glimpses are provided into the natural phenomenon or idea behind their apotheosis. Many of them have obvious affinities with their Iranian counterparts and Indo-European prototypes. Sūrya as a sun-god is thought of primarily as the visible orb of light. He is golden. His chariot is drawn by seven horses. He is a healer, obviously because of the healing qualities of the sun rays. Savitā, 'the stimulator of everything' (sarvasya prasavitā),² denotes his abstract qualities. Pūshan specifies his benevolent power, manifested chiefly as a pastoral deity. Bhaga, according to Yāska presides over the forenoon.³ Vivasvān (Iranian Vivanhant) probably originally represented the

¹Srivastava, V.C., Sun-Worship in Ancient India, Allahabad, 1972, pp. 24-34. ²DHI, p. 428.

²The words *bhagavat* and *bhagya* are derived from *bhaga* which is the Indian form of the Indo-European word bogu = god.

rising sun but was also looked upon as the first sacrificer, the ancestor of the human race. The Vedic legend (RV, I. 164) about the marriage of Saranyu, the daughter of Tvashta, with Vivasvān was obviously the basis of the later Paurāņika story about Sūrva marrying Samijnā, the daughter of Viśvakarmā, her desertion of Sūrya after leaving with him her shadow (Chhāyā) due to her inability to bear her husband's excessive brilliance and Viśvakarmā's attempt to reduce it. Mitra (Iranian Mithra),1 closely associated with Varuna, was regarded as a god of pure achievement and thrived in rta. Aryaman, so far his description is concerned, is almost wholly devoid of physical traits and hence does not correspond to any aspect of the sun. Vishnu, the personification of the swift moving sun and famous for his march across the sky in three great padas, later became one of the main constituents of the composite god of the Vaishnava religion. The Aśvins are the most concrete of solar gods. Their solar character is affirmed by their connection with Ushas (Dawn) who comes in their wake,2 and with Sūryā (daughter of Sūrya) and Savitr.

Most of the deities mentioned above along with a few others like Varuna, Amsa Daksha, Dhātr, Mārtanda, etc., came to constitute a special class of gods collectively known as the Ādityas,3 'sons of Aditi', though Aditi was also looked upon as the mother of all the other Vedic divinities. Six Adityas are mentioned in the RV (II. 27): Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Daksha and Amsa. The Satapatha Brāhmaṇa at one place fixes their number at eight while at two other places it raises the number to twelve and identifies them with the 12 months. The epics, Puranas and other later texts accept the number twelve and usually name them as (1) Dhātā, (2) Mitra, (3) Aryaman, (4) Rudra, (5) Varuņa, (6) Sūrya, (7) Bhaga, (8) Vivasvān, (9) Pūshan, (10) Savitā, (11) Tvashțā and (12) Vishņu. Many of the solar deities of the Vedic period are found here.

The Brahmanas, the Upanishads and the Sutras allude to the worship of Sūrya and his many aspects. As is well-known the

¹Hodivala, S.K., 'Mitra-Mithra', AIOC, II.

²For a detailed study of Usha, vide, Shembvarnekar, 'Uşas', ABORI, XVII.

The word Aditya is also used in singular number indicating the sun. Banerjea, PTR, p. 134 f.

Gāvatrī mantra of a Brahmana text, also known as Sāvitrī, is made up of a Rgvedic verse (III.62 10) - Tat Saviturvarenyam bhargo devasya dhīmahi dhiyo yo nah prachodayāt in the Vedic metre gāyatrī, with the addition of the pranava (Om) and three vyahrtis (bhū, bhūva and svar) in the beginning. In the Āranyakas, Upanishads and Grhyasūtras, Sūrya is identified with Brahman (asāvādityo Brahma). The $T\bar{A}$ (X.1) lays down the Āditya-gāyatrī as Bhāskarāya vidmahe madādyutikarāya dhīmahi tanna Ādityaḥ prachodavāt, it being a little different from the Maitrāvaņīya Samhitā Sūrya-gāyatrī which reads—Bhāskarāya vidmahe Prabhākarāva dhīmahi tanno Bhānuḥ prachodayāt. The eight-syllable Tantrika Sūrya-mantra, Om ghṛṇi Sūrya Ādityaḥ, is nothing but one of the Aditya-mantras of the $T\bar{A}$ with the simple addition of the pranava prefix.2

The Solar Symbols

The sun-god is represented by various symbols and the wheel is one of them. A gold plate also symbolizes the sun (\hat{SB} , VII.4.1.10). A gold disc was laid at the time of piling of the fire alter to represent the sun (SB, VII. 41.1.10). The lotus is also found in the hands of sun-images, and it was later taken over by Vishnu and his wife Lakshmi. The lotus is inseparably connected with the sun probably because it blooms only while the sun shines. Garuda. the bird mount of the sun, is absent in the Vedic literature though in a Rgvedic passage Garutman apparently stands for the sun (divyah suparno Garutmān). According to another view the sun is a horse brought (i.e. ushered) by Ushā (RV, VII.77.3). He is also quite often described as riding a car 'some times drawn by one. and at other times by several, four or seven, swift and ruddy horses or mares'.3 In the Shodasin sacrifice a horse was placed in the hands of the priest and it symbolized the sun. The horse was a strong and probably the fastest animal known to the Aryans and they ascribed its speed and strength to its solar origin. The

¹PTR, p. 137.

²Ibid. For the history of Sun worship in the pre-Paurāņika age vide also, Dass, Ayodhya Chandra, 'Pre-Pauranic Form of Sun Worship in Atharvaveda Samhita, Vishveshvarananda Indological Journal, XIX, 1-2, pp. 20-9; Ursekar, H.S., 'The Sun in the Rgveda', Bhāratīya Vidyā, XXVIII, 1968, pp. 55-63.

^{*}PTR, p. 136.

relationship between the sun-god and the serpent, however, is one of hostility for the serpent symbolizes evil, and the sun goodness. Vishņu in his Kṛshṇa avatāra fought and subjugated Kālīya, the water-snake; Vishṇu sleeps over Śeshanāga, and his mount Garuḍa eats serpents.¹

Origin of the Solar Cult

Though the sun worship as a cult and sect became established only in the epic-Paurāņika age (infra), its antecedents may be traced back to the Vedic texts. In RV I.50.7 Surya is 'the soul of movable and immovable world'. It is significantly said that the sun god is one though he is variously named. In later times he was identified with Prajāpati and the Gāyatrī mantra became indicative of his supremacy. At some places the Āranyakas and Upanishads regard the sun as the best manifestation of the highest reality. Among the Ghora Āngirasa, Kaushītaki, Upanishadic seers Bharadvāja, Pippalāda and Vāmadeva were prominent sun worshippers. rshi Kaushitaki, who worshipped the sun in the morning, at noon and in the evening, also laid down the three mantras with which the rising sun, the sun on the meridian and the setting sun are to be worshipped with offerings of water, flowers, sandal etc. Grhyasūtras there are definite instructions for the sandhyopāsanā which is nothing but sun worship.

The Vedic seers adored the sun primarily for the removal of sins and bestowal of riches, food, fame, health etc. In RV VII. 60.1 and I.62.2 the sinner wishes the rising sun to declare him sinless to Mitra, Varuna and other gods. Rshi Kaushītaki adored the sun for the removal of sin. In the Upanayana ceremony Savitā is prayed to protect the student so that he may not die. The Khadira GS (IV.1.14 and 23) prescribes the adoration of the sun for the attainment of riches and fame. The idea of the association of the sun with the removal of sin and the bestowal of riches, food etc. continued to be popular in later ages as well. Thus, many elements of the sectarian sun worship may be traced back to the Vedic texts.

¹Bhattacharji, S., The Indian Theogony, p. 232.

Bhandarkar, VSMR, p. 216 f.

²Srivastava, op. cit., p. 178 ff.; 'Studies in the Origins of the Solar Cult and Sect in India,' PIHC, 1965, p. 69 f.

However the Saura or Solar cult, one of the five cardinal cults of Paurānika Hinduism, took shape gradually in the post-Vedic period and became a fact only in the early centuries of the Christian era or shortly before it. According to Hopkins the Saura sect is as old as the Vaishnava and Saiva sects and V.C. Srivastava places its origin in 5th-4th century B.C. But it appears highly unlikely. Pāṇini (c. 5th-4th century B.C.) and Patañjali (2nd century B.C.) refer to the worship of Sūrya but not to his However the two Epics contain clear indications of the existence of the cult associated with the solar god. The Rāmā. refers to saints who were specially devoted to the worship of the sun.1 In Rāmā. V. 106 Rāma worships the sun by ceremonially reciting the Ādityahrdayastava under the advice of Agastya before he killed The Mbh. (II.50.16) describes sun as Devesvara. appears in human form before Kunti, Karna, Yudhishthira and Jamadgni. He has a family and various attendants of his own. He is the day-maker, light-giver, corn-producer, rain-maker, embodiment of tejas, and identical with time. Karna, the brave hero, is his son and exclusive worshipper. In the battle between Karna and Arjuna Adityas take side of the former. The Mbh. (III.3.3) also contains a stotra of 108 names of Āditya which the sage Dhaumya advised Yudhishthira to recite in the Kāmyakavana. is also claimed in the Epic that a sun worshipper can remember his previous birth, gain sharp memory and intellect as well as wealth. Yudhishthira was bestowed a vessel by Sūrya for the production of all the food wanted by the former.

The two laudatory poems—the one recited by Rāma in the Rāmā. and the other taught by Dhaumya to Yudhishthira in the Mbh.—give one a clear idea of the importance of Sūrya. In the Mbh. it is claimed that the 108 names of Sūrya were originally taught by Brahmā to Śakra and by the latter to Nārada who in turn taught them to Dhaumya. The Mbh. identifies Sūrya with all the great gods. He is adored by all gods, Siddhas, Vasus, Rudras etc. Sudarśana Chakra is made of his lustre. He is Kāla, Ādideva, Charācharātmā, Sūkshmātmā and Viśvakarmā. The three Vedas are his form.²

¹Srivastava, Sun-Worship in Ancient India, 1972, p. 183; Pande, L.P., Sun Worship in Ancient India, 1972.

²Srivastava, op. cit., p. 178 ff.

Evidence for the Continued Existence of the Indigenous Solar Cult

Apart from the epics there are other evidences for the continued existence of an indigenous Solar cult in the two centuries preceding the birth of Christ and in the post-Christian centuries. Some figures on ancient Indian coins and a Bharhut medallion containing a bust of the sun god with a lotus representing his rays suggest his popularity in the pre-Christian period. The coins of the Uddehikas and the Panchala Mitra kings like Suryamitra and Bhānumitra bear on their reverse the solar disc on a pedestal.1 At Bodhgaya on a stone railing the god is seen riding on a onewheeled chariot (eka chakra) drawn by four horses. He is attended on either side by a female figure (Ushā and Pratyūshā) shooting arrows. The Buddhist cave at Bhājā of the first cent. B.C. bears on the left side of its facade Surya seated in a quadriga in company of two female figures (probably Ushā and Pratyūshā). At Lala Bhagat on one face of a many sided column the sun god is seen riding on a four-horse chariot with one wheel (2nd cent. A.D.). A more or less similar composition is seen in the Sūrya relief found in a small cave at Khandagiri (1st cent. A.D.). All these reliefs belonging the various regions of the country seem to have been inspired by the Rgvedic description of Sūrya.2

The continued existence of the indigenous sun worship in India is evidenced by epigraphic records also. During the reign of Skandagupta (455-67 A.D.) a Brāhmaṇa named Devavishṇu donated some money to the Sun temple of Indrapura (mod. village of Indore in the Bulandshahar Dist. of U.P.).³ The Gwalior record of Mihirakula (c. 512-30 A.D.) refers to the construction of a sun temple at Gopādri (Gwalior).⁴ In the Sonepat seal, the three ancestors of Harsha namely Prabhākaravardhana, Ādityavardhana and Rājyavardhana I are given the epithet Paramādityabhakta and the same title is given to the Gurjara-Pratihāra kings Vināyakapāla and Rāmabhadra. A seal discovered by Spooner at Basarh contains a fire altar with the solar disc placed above it. The

¹For a study of solar symbols on ancient Indian coins see *DHI*, p. 138 ff.; also see Singh, O.P., *Religion and Iconography on Early Indian Coins*, Varanasi, 1978, Ch. VI.

^aCf. AIU, p. 466; DHI, p. 432 f.

Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 260.

⁴¹bid., p. 360.

legend on the seal written in Gupta characters reads Bhagavata Ādityasya.¹

As regards the literary evidence, a poem of 100 verses (Suryaśataka) was composed by Mayūra (probably the father-in law of Bāṇabhaṭṭa) in honour of Sūrya. The Sūtradhara in the Mālatīmādhava prays to Sūrya in a general way, and the Mārkaṇḍeya P. contains prayers to the god, and several mythologies connected with him. The Smrti text quoted in Anandagiri's Sankaravijayakāvya describes Savitā as the one eye of the universe, the cause of creation, preservation and destruction of the world, the receptacle of the three gunas (sattva, rajas and tamas), and as identical with Brahmā, Vishņu and Śiva. Bāṇabhatṭa's Harshacharita describes how Harshavardhana's father Prabhākaravardhana, a devotee of Āditya, paid his homage to the god and recited everyday early in the morning, at noon and in the evening the Adityahrdaya-mantra. Krshnamiśra, an eleventh century dramatist, presents the Vaishnavas, Saivas and Sauras under the general command of goddess Sarasvatī as engaged in battle with the Buddhists, Jainas and Chārvākas under the general command of Mahāmoha.

Nature of the Indigenous Saura Sect

From the above account it is obvious that there existed in India a sect devoted to the exclusive worship of the sun² probably from the 3rd or 2nd century B.C. The ideological connection of this indigenous Saura sect with the Vedic tradition is quite apparent. In the Mbh. the Sauras are said to have been expert in Vedic studies. The survival of the Vedic names of the sun, the description of Sūrya as Vedakartā, and his invocation by Kuntī with Vedic hymns also prove it. The account of the Saura sect with its six subdivisions as given by Ānandagiri in his Sankaravijayakāvya also proves its Vedic affiliation. Here it is said that some Sauras with Divākara as their leader carrying red flowers in their hands met Śankara at a place called Subrahmanya situated at a distance of fourteen days journey from Anantaśayana or Trivandrum. They described before him the excellence of the sun

¹DHI, p. 198.

Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 217.

god. They quoted such Vedic passages as Sūrya ātmā jagatastasthūshaścha (Sūrya is the soul of movable and immovable things) asāvādityo Brahma (That Āditya is Brahma), etc. and contended that it was Surya who was the cause of the world and the Supreme Soul. Their six subdivisions are briefly described by Anandagiri thus: the first group worshipped the rising sun as Brahmā, the sole creator of the universe; the second adored the noon-day sun as Rudra-Śiva, the destroyer of the world; the third venerated the setting sun as Vishnu as the creator, preserver and destroyer; the fourth combined all these aspects of the god; the fifth meditated on the golden coloured presiding deity of the solar orb; and the last performed the Saura-vrata consisting of fervently looking at the sun disc, offering ceremonial worship to the deity, dedicating all their works to the god, and breaking their fast after having seen the sun etc. All of them had the mark of the solar orb branded on their forehead, arms and chest with the help of a red hot iron style, and always concentrated their minds on the sun.1

Foreign Influence on the Solar Cult: the Paurāṇika Evidence

But the Indian solar cult was influenced, at least in North India, by Persian beliefs and practices from a very early date. It is proved by the various Saura Purānas, other texts such as the Brhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira, Scythian coins and a number of inscriptions. Of the numerous Puranas it is the Samba P. which deals principally with the cult of the sun. Another Pauranika text which regarded as the locus classicus for our knowledge of the foreign influence on the solar cult of northern India² is the Bhavishya P. It gives an account of the origin of the cult, the solar deity and his associates, the mode of worship, the solar priests (Bhojakas, Magas, Somakas, etc.), and the solar festivals. Some material on sun worship is also found in the Skanda, Matsya, Brahma, Varāha Agni, Garuda, Vishmudharmottara, Bhavishyottara and Markandeya Purāṇas. From the combined testimony of these sources it appears that a new form of sun-worship was introduced in India by the bands of the Magi priests who came from Sakadvīpa or Sākadvīpa, probably Siestan or Eastern or South-eastern Iran, in the wake of the

¹PTR, p. 139 f.; cf. also Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 217 f. ²PTR, p. 140.

Śakas, Pahlavas and others, specially the Śakas. They called their deity Mithra or Mihira. They first established at a place called Mitravana on the banks of the Chandrabhāgā in the Punjab and built at this place a city called Mūlasthāna (mod. Multan) and a sun temple containing an image of their deity. But their conception of the sun god, the procedure of his worship, their manners and customs, all differed greatly from those of the adherents of the Vedic solar cult. Hence in order to modify the earlier solar cult by incorporating Magian elements and accord recognition to the Magas as full-fledged Brāhmaṇas, new chapters were incorporated into the Sāmba, Bhavishya and other Purāṇas.¹

According to the Sāmba P. Nārada, the irascible sage, was offended by Sāmba, the son of Vāsudeva-Kṛshṇa. Thereupon Nārada caused Kṛshṇa to curse Sāmba to become an ugly leper. When Samba pleaded innocent he was advised to appease Narada who in turn advised him to worship the sun to get cured. At that time Nārada also described his own visit to Sūryaloka where he found the sun attended by the Yakshas, Gandharvas, etc., by the three Vedas, the sages, and the three Sandhyas, and by Brahma, Vishnu, Rudra and other gods. Consequently, Samba went to the great river Chandrabhāgā, and then to Mitravana, emaciated his body with fasts there and eulogised the sun who cured him of leprosy. The sun also advised Samba to establish a sun image on the bank of the Chandrabhāgā, at the place which was to become famous by the name Sāmbapura. Sāmba found this image in the river Chandrabhaga itself. After erecting a temple for the image Sāmba, at the advice of Nārada and the sun, brought eighteen families of the Magas from Sakadvīpa² to be its priests because the Brāhmanas of the Jambudvīpa had become degraded. The Magas of the Sakadvipa were divided into four castes—Maga, Masaga,3 Manasa and Mandaga, corresponding to the four Varnas of Jambudvipa but having no mixed castes. They were

¹Hazra, R.C., 'The Sāmba-Purāna, a Saura Work of Different Hands', ABORI, XXXVI, Pt. i-ii, 1955, p. 62 ff.

^aFor a discussion on the problem whether this name is Śakadvīpa or Śākadvīpa, Vide Deb, B.C., 'Śākadvīpa', ABORI, XXXVI, Pt. iii-iv, 1955, p. 358 ff.

³Probably identical with the Massagetae mentioned by Herodotus (cf. Hazra, op. cit., p. 70, n. 2; Deb, B.C., 'Śākadvīpa,' ABORI, XXXVI, Pt. iii-iv 1955, p. 360).

borne of the tejas of the sun, wore avyangas and had the four Vedas given to them by the sun.

This story of Sāmba forms the nucleus of the Sāmba P. In connection with it a few subsidiary stories have been introduced which glorify the sun and throw light on his family. For instance there are the stories of the penance of Samjñā, the wife of the sun in the Uttarakuru country because she could not tolerate the brilliance of her husband and left him after creating another woman Chhāyā (her own shadow) to take her place; of the birth of the various sons and daughters to the sun-god; of Viśvakarmā's paring of the sun's rays by means of a lathe; of the establishment of sun's image in sun's tapovana on the shore of the salt ocean etc.

According to the Bhavishya P., however, the temple of the god was erected by Sāmba at Mūlasthānapura (modern Multan). As no local Brāhmaṇa would or could serve there, on the advice of Gauramukha, the priest of Ugrasena, Sāmba brought the Magas, the special worshippers of the sun, from Śakadvīpa and entrusted them the task of officiating as priests in the temple, as a result of which he got cured.

The Bhavishya P. also gives us an imaginary account of the origin of the Magas. A son named Jarasabda or Jarasasta (obviously Zoroaster) was born to Nikshubhā, the daughter of Sujihvā, a Śakadvīpī Brāhmana of the Mihira gotra, through the sun-god. This Jarasabda-Jarasasta was the ancestor of the Magas who worshipped the sun-god, their original progenitor. They used to wear the sacred girdle called avyanga on their waist.

The worship of the sun as Mithra was prevalent in Iran from very early times. Herodotus refers to a belief among the Persians that if a sin is committed by someone against the sun god, he is attacked with leprosy, and can be cured of it only after the proper propitiation of the god. The prevalence of such a belief in India is evidenced by the instance of Mayūra, the author of the poem Sūryaśataka. The name Maga is the Indian adaption of the Magii, the sun-worshipping priests of Iran, and avyanga is nothing but the Indian form of aivyaonghen, the sacred waist-girdle worn by them. In the description of the sun image given in

¹Cf. Arora, R.K., Historical and Cultural Data from the Bhavisya Purana, Delhi, 1972, p. 66 ff.

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the Brhatsamhita, it is expressly laid down that it should not only be shown wearing a northerner's dress (udichyaveśa)—a close fitting cloak or tunic (kañchukaguptaḥ), covered with (boots) from the foot reaching upto the thigh (gudham pādād uru yāvat)1-but should also be wearing a viyanga (a variant of avyanga). According to Varāhamihira, it was the Magas who were the proper persons to install the image of the Sun (Magāmscha Savituḥ. . . . kāryā kriyā).2 Varāhamihira was probably himself a Maga Utpala described Brahmana for him as Āvantikāchārya, Arkalabdhavaraprasāda, and Magadhadvija-the last epithet, when taken alongwith the others, obviously being a scribal error or misprint for Magadvija.3

The existence of the Magas in India⁴ is noticed by quite early authorities. Ptolemy says in his Geographicon (BK. VII, section 74) that there were Maga Brāhmaṇas (Brachmanoi Magoi) in India, and they lived in a town named Brachme. Alberuni also informs us that the Hindus of Multan used to celebrate a festival named Sāmbapurayātrā before the image of the sun every year. According to his evidence, the Magii, who settled in India, were known by the name of Maga. A stone inscription of the Śaka year 1059 (=1137-38 A.D.) found at Govindapur (Gaya District, Bihar)⁵ records in its opening verses that the Magas descended from the sun-god and were brought into India by Śāmba (Śāmbo yānānināya) from the Śakadvīpa. The author of the inscription was the poet Gaṅgādhara who belonged to a line of Maga Brāhmaṇas settled in the region.

¹The actual reading is $g\bar{u}dha\dot{m}$ $p\bar{a}d\bar{a}duroy\bar{a}vat$ meaning 'covered with boots from the foot upto the chest'. It has been rightly corrected by B.C. Deb as $g\bar{u}dha\dot{m}$ $p\bar{a}d\bar{a}d$ $\bar{u}ru$ $y\bar{a}vat$.

²Deb, B.C., op. cit., p. 361.

²Ibid. D.K. Biswas suggests the same (IHQ, 1949, pp. 175-83).

^{&#}x27;According to V.C. Srivastava a wave of the Magas had entered India as early as the 5th cent. B.C. (op. cit., p. 244 f.), though its influence was limited. Cf. also his 'Antiquity of Magas in Ancient India', PIHC, 1968, pp. 86-94. Also see Das, T.C., 'The Sun Worship in Ancient India', AIOC, II. For a detailed study of the Magas in India vide, Arora, R.K., Historical and Cultural Data in the Bhavisya Purāna, Delhi, 1972, Ch. II.

EI, II, p. 330.

Foreign Elements in Solar Iconography

The evidence of the Brhatsamhitā about the foreign elements in the iconography of the sun image is also supported by other texts. The Vishnudharmottara says that the god should have four arms, should be covered with a coat of mail and should wear a Northerner's dress and the waist girdle known as yavīyānga (avayanga). Other North Indian texts also refer to the udichyaveśa, avyanga and boots (upānatpinaddha pāda yugalam) of the sun.1

Actual solar images found from the various parts of North India are consonant with the literary tradition. In the Saka-Kushāņa period Gandhāra and Mathurā regions appear to have been the main centres of the foreign influence on solar cult, for many Sūrya images wearing tunic and boots have been found there.2 A small figure of boot-wearing Sūrya in black slate found in Gandhara shows the god seated on a chariot drawn by four horses and attended by two female figures.3 The dress of the Sūrya reliefs found from Niyamatpur and Kumarpur (Bangladesh) as well from the Bhumara Siva temple (c. 6th century A.D.)4 very strikingly resembles that of the Kushana kings like Wema Kadphises and Kanishka shown on their coins and sculptures. The heavy coat and boots of the early Surya figures in imitation of those of the Kushana kings are evidently described by Varahamihira as udīchyavešam gūdham pādādūruyāvat (northerner's dress covering the body from the legs to the thigh).5

The iconographic representation of Sūrya came to be far more elaborate in course of time. The figures of several spouses of the god, such as Nikshubhā, Chhāyā, Samjñā or Rājñī, Suvarnā and Suvarchasā, with the goddess Mahāśvetā and other attendants are now depicted crowding round the main deity. Several medieval sculptures of eastern India show Revanta, the

¹DHI, p. 437.

^aCf. AIU, p. 466. For the probable connection of the Śunga, Kanva and Hūna kings with Mitra(Mithra) worship see N.N. Basu, Castes and Sects of Bengal, IV, p. 56 f.

^{*}DHI, p. 434.

⁴Ibid., p. 435.

As pointed out by J.N. Banerjea (*DHI*, p. 431) Indian sun image did not have its prototype in the Iranian Mithra, as in Persia the tradition of making the image of the sun-god in anthropomorphic form did not exist. Therefore the foreign elements in the dress of the sun images must be regarded as Indian so far as their rendering in art is concerned.

son of Sūrya, with a drinking cup in his hand and accompanied by a host of followers.

The Sun Temples

One of the earliest sun temples is said to have stood in the city of Takshasila at the time of Gondophernes (1st half of the 1st century A.D.) and it was visited by Apollonius of Tyana. Yuan Chwang gives a graphic description of the Multan sun temple in his Si-yu-ki: "Of the many temples of Multan, the large and beautiful sun temple was worthy of note: the golden image of the god was studded with precious stones; it was miracle-working, and its fame spread far and wide. The Danseuse (Devadasis?) used to sing and dance inside the temple; it was illumined throughout the night, and offerings of flowers, incense, etc., were made at all times. The Indian kings and potentates used to dedicate rich presents to the god, and caused to be built rest-houses and hospitals for pilgrims. Not less than 1000 pilgrims from different parts of the country used to congregate and pray there everyday. The temple precincts were charming, for it was surrounded by big tanks and beautiful gardens". Yuan Chwang also refers to a splendid sun temples at Kanauj. The Arab georaphers like Alberuni Abu Isak al Istakhri and Al Idrisi also write about the Multan temple, and the image enshrined there. Alberuni writes that "there is an image of the sun named Aditya at Multan. It is made of wood and covered with red skin; two rubies are set on its eyes. The prosperity of the town was mainly due to it, for pilgrims from various parts of India used to come to see it and offer it untold wealth".2

Inscriptions from the early medieval or even Gupta period onwards record the erection and maintenance of the temples of the sun mostly associated with this particular type of sun worship. The Mandasaur stone inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I records the erection of a magnificent sun temple in 436 A.D. by a band of silk weavers who came there from the Lāṭa Vishaya. Some members of the guild were very much adept in the science of astrology which indicates their connection with this form of the

¹Watters, op. cit., II, p. 254.

²Sachau, Alberuni's India, pp. 116, 184.

Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 352 ff.

cult for the Daivajña-āchāryas, experts in astronomy and astrology, were regarded as descendants of the Magas. another class of Maga Brahmanas, are mentioned in the Deo-Baranark (Shahabad District, Bihar) pillar inscription of Jīvitagupta II of the Later Gupta dynasty.1 Burgess has recorded the discovery of many old sun temples datable from the Gupta period onwards from Multan to Kutch. Sankalia draws attention to the wide-spread prevalence of this form of the cult during the same period all over Gujarat on the basis of numerous inscriptions, and Sircar reports the existence of several early medieval sun temples at Bhilsa, Pushkara and Gaya.2 The Martanda temple in Kashmir was most probably built by Lalitaditya Muktapida in the middle of the 8th century A.D., who also built a temple of Aditya at Lāṭapur. The sun temple at Koṇārka was built in the 13th century A.D. by Lāngulīya Narasimhadeva of the Ganga dynasty in the shape of a huge chariot on wheels in the Arkakshetra at Konārka.

Maturity and Weakness of the Saura Sect

Thus, in the Paurāṇika age the Saura cult is found in a quite mature sectarian form. In the Purāṇas the human form of the god has become more explicit and reference is made to the numerous vratas associated with his cult. The description in the Mbh. of the Sūryaloka by Nārada, the claim that the sun is the cause of the creation, protection and destruction of the world, invocation of the god in a sectarian fashion in the Indore copper plate of Skandagupta, Mandasaur inscription of Kumāragupta I, Khoh inscription of Šarvanātha etc., the assumption of the title Paramādityabhakta or Paramasaura by Vardhana, Maitraka and Pratihāra rulers, the composition of the work like the Sūryaśataka of Mayūra and of the sectarian Saura Purāṇas—all these indicate to the maturity of solar sectarianism.

However, despite the fact that the worship of the sun assumed maturer and devotional character in the epic-Paurānika age and was strengthened by foreign influences and probably received special patronage of some rulers as well, it did not become as popular as the other main Paurānika sects were, most likely because Vishņu,

¹Fleet, Corpus, III, p. 213ff.

^{*}PTR, p. 143, n. 32a.

another solar god, had already attracted the masses and physical sun, always visible to the naked eye, was an obstacle in the conception of Sūrya as a 'human' divinity. In the South the Sakadvīpī form of solar worship did not make any headway. "The South Indian figures of Sūrya have the legs and feet always left bare, and instead of the long coat of North India we find him invariably wearing the *Udarabandha*. There are other minor differences too which grew, and brought the differences into still sharper relief in the medieval age." The orthodox tradition of the South developed "on the lines of the Satapatha Brāhmaņa prescription of a golden disc to represent the solar orb and the Upanishadic doctrine of the golden Purusha in the Sun and the philosophically inclined thought less of the "all-red" deity and more of Brahman as the Ultimate Being with which the Sun was identified". Actually in the South the solar cult in general also did not flourish much² and Gopinatha Rao even thinks it curious to find a sun temple (Mārtaṇḍālaya) in the South Indian village of Sūryanarkoyil built during the region of Kulottunga (1070-1120 A.D.) in the Tanjore District.

In the North also the Sauras never became a rival of the Vaishnavas, Saivas and Saktas. Though the Smarta Panchopasaka Hindus continued to worship the sun, yet as pointed out by Banerjea, no distinct school of philosophy grew up round him.³ The early Maga immigrants were merged in course of time in the vast Indian population, only partially maintaining their individual entity by forming a separate caste, which include the Daivajñas, Grahavipras, and Agradanis (those who were given precedence in the presentation of food and gifts in times of Śrāddha ceremonies). Some of them took to the profession of preparing horoscopes, while others officiated as priests especially for the performance of grahapūjā (Grahacharyās).4

Dvādaśādityas, Revanta and Navagrahas

With the worship of the sun is connected the worship of twelve Ādityas, Revanta, Navagrahas etc. Dvādaśādityas (supra, p. 328) are

¹CA, p. 443.

²One of the tutelary deities of the Śālankāyanas of Andhra was the sun (Chitraratha).

³PTR, p. 146.

⁴Cf. PTR, p. 145f.; Deb, B.C., op. cit., p. 364 f.

variously enumerated in the different texts. The Vishņudharmottara says that the twelve Ādityas should be given the form of Sūrya. Separate images of the Ādityas are quite rare. They are usually shown on the detached frames or on the prabhāvalī of the Sūrya images.

Sūrya is credited with several sons including Yama, the Asvins, Manu and Revanta. The Kālikā P. says that Revanta should be worshipped either in an image or a water-vessel. The Brhatsamhitā and the Vishnudharmottara state that the Lord Revanta should be shown on the horseback.

The worship of Navagrahas was and is still popular. Ravi, Soma, Mangala, Budha, Brhaspati, Śukra, Śani, Rahu and Ketu are the Navagrahas. Barring the first two and the last two the rest are all 'planets'. Alongwith the Adityas their worship came to occupy a very important position in the Paurāņika religion. The Navagrahas were worshipped by all to avert danger arising out of the anger of these 'gods', and so their images were in great demand. The particular ceremony was known by the name of grahayāga or svastyāyana. The word graha does not occur in this sense in the Samhitas, Brahmana texts, Āranyakas, Upanishads and Epics. The Mbh. and the Rāmā. mention five grahas only rarely, usually without naming them. It is only in some Smrti texts and specially in the Puranas that rules are laid down for the performance of the grahayāga. The Matsya, Agni and a few other Purānas as well as the Yajñavalkyasmṛti refer to such rules in detail and give the names of the nine in correct order. The reliefs of the Navagrahas were almost invariably carved on the architraves of the main sanctum of the medieval shrines of different cult deities or on the prabhāvalī of the cult images. According to J.N. Banerjea in Orissa the number of the grahas on the templereliefs of the Bhauma-Kara period is eight (Ketu being absent), while those in the later shrines of the Ganga age always come up to nine, including Ketu. In a fragmentary relief of the late Gupta period also, now in the collection of the Sarnath Museum, Ketu does not appear.1

Chapter 14

Ganapati and the Ganapatya Sect

Introduction

In the Hindu religious ceremonies the first god to be invoked is Gaņeśa, also known as Gajānana or Vināyaka (ādau pūjyo Vināyakah). Even in homage paid to other gods his name is always placed first. He is regarded as the remover of difficulties (vighnahara), giver of success and prosperity in life (rddhi-siddhi $d\bar{a}t\bar{a}$) and is also the symbol of confidence and intelligence. The later Paurānika mythology makes him the son of Siva and Parvati and assigns him the leadership of the impish attendants (Ganas or Pramathas) of Rudra-Śiva. In the Puranas as well as in the countless image found throughout India, he is generally depicted as a pot-bellied elephant-headed god with one tusk (ekadanta) riding on or attended by a rat (mūshaka). He has four hands which hold a shell, discus, club and sweetmeat (modaka). In Maharashtra Śāradā is regarded as his wife. In the South, however, he is conceived as a celibate.

The concept of rat as the vāhana of Ganeśa is quite intriguing. According to S.K. Gupta the factor which associated the rat with Ganeśa "may be traced in the character of the creature itself. It is the destroying habit of the rat which brought the animal in contact with Ganeśa, the Vighnarāja, and turned it into his mount. The rat or mouse was a constant problem in ancient times in villages, towns and in agricultural fields. Therefore,

¹For the various theories on the association of rat with Ganesa see Foucher in Getty's Genesa (p. xxiii); Zimmer, Heinrich, The Art of Asia, New York, 1955, I, p. 47; Frazer, J.G., The Golden Bough, p. 696; Gupte, B.A., 'Harvest Festivals in Honour of Gauri and Ganesa', IA, XXXV, 1906, p. 63.

it was considered to be a source of vighna (trouble). Hence the idea that rat is the vāhana of Gaņeśa".

Gāṇapatya Literature

Though material concerning the worship of Ganeśa has been traced by orthodox scholars even in the Vedic Samhitās, but mostly it is the various Purāṇas which furnish detailed stories and myths about him. Two Mahāpurāṇas, the Brahma and the Brahmāṇḍa, and two Upapurāṇas, the Ganeśa and the Maudgala, deal with all the aspects of his greatness and glory. The other Purāṇas like the Brahmavaivartta, Linga, Matsya, Nārada, Śiva, etc. too mention his origin and greatness. Of these texts the Ganeśa P. and the Maudgala P. are the most important.

Chronologically the Gaṇeśa P. is later than the Mahāpurāṇas. At the commencement of the Gaṇeśa P. mention is made of the 18 Mahāpurāṇas. Some lists do not mention the Gaṇeśa P. even as an Upapurāṇa. However, the Gaṇeśa P. is one the most important texts for the Gāṇapatyas not only because it deals with the Gaṇeśa worship in detail but also because it contains the Gaṇeśagītā, a text of eleven chapters and 414 verses mostly in anushṭubh metre. It is a short and interesting religio-philosophical treatise, one of the numerous 'gītāgranthas' in Sanskrit literature. It describes the philosophical aspect of Gaṇeśa worship in detail. Some later Upanishads such as the Gāṇapatyatharvaśīrsha Upa. also deal with the philosophy and symbolism of Gaṇeśa worship.

Antiquity of Ganesa Worship

The problem of the antiquity of Ganeśa, the elephant-headed god, may be studied with reference to three points: the antiquity of elephant worship, the antiquity of the worship of Ganeśa as the elephant-headed god and the antiquity of the Ganapatyas as a sect. As regards the first point, according to S.K. Chatterji philological evidence suggests that an elephant god was worshipped by the pre-Aryan races of India; and he seems to be right. So far as the worship of Ganeśa the elephant-headed deity is concerned, it emerged quite late among the Aryans. It could not have been

¹Gupta, S.K., Elephant in Indian Art and Culture, New Delhi, 1983, p. 58 f.
²Chatterji, S.K., Bhāratīya Ārya Bhāshā aura Hindi, Bombay, 1954; cf. Sampurnananda, Ganeša.

an imported concept because elephants are not found in the where the Aryans region from came into this country. The name Ganapati occurs in the RV (II. 2. 23), but it does not mean in this context the Paurāņika god Gaņeśa. In the Vājasaneyī Samhitā of the Śukla Yajurveda the word ganapati occurs with nidhipati and priyapati. The whole extract (23.19) reads: Gaṇānām tvā Ganapatim havāmahe priyānām tvā priyapatim havāmahe nidhinām tvā nidhipatim havāmahe vaso mama/ Āhamajāni garbhadamātvamajāsi garbhadham. But as pointed out by J.N. Banerjea the context in which this invocation occurs shows that all the three epithets - gaṇapati, priyapati and nidhipati are addressed to the horse, killed in the Aśvamedha, by the chief-queen when she lies down with the dead horse under cover. The Maitrayaniya Samhita of the Kṛshṇa Yajurveda not only quotes the identical passage, but also adds a few words which show that the chief-queen of the ruler performing the Asvamedha was desirous of virile and powerful sons and this part of the sacrifice where the mantra is uttered was thought necessary for the fulfilment of her desire. Thus, there can be no question of finding in ganapati and nidhipati of the Vedic text even the slightest reference to the Paurānika gods Ganeśa and Kubera.1

There is no mention of elephant-headed Gaṇapati and his worshippers in the Ashṭādhyāyī of Pāṇini, the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali, the Rāmāyaṇa, the early Purāṇas and any inscription till the end of the Gupta age. The word Āmbika occurs in the Saundarananda of Aśvaghosha (1st cent. A.D.) but it does not necessarily indicate Gaṇeśa. The story given in the introduction of the Mbh. about Gaṇeśa having served as the amenuensis of Vyāsa while the latter was composing the Great Epic has been unanimously accepted as a late interpolation.² The Nanaghat inscription of Nāganikā, the Sātavāhana queen (first century B.C.), refers to the gods of quarters, Saṅkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva, etc. but does not mention Gaṇeśa. Coomaraswamy is inclined to look upon an image of one of the Amarāvatī railings, which probably belongs to the beginning of the Christian era, as a transitional form of Gaṇeśa.³ But

¹DHI, p. 575.

²Banerjea, PTR, p. 151; cf. Sharma, B.R., 'Ganapati in the Epics', Bhāratīya Vidyā, XXXV, 1975, pp. 1-12.

³Cf. Gupta, S.K., op. cit., p. 57.

according to Getty though the head of this image, including the eyes, ears and lower lips, is unquestionably that of elephant, the image has neither trunk nor tusk.1 It, therefore, cannot be confidently asserted that it is really a prototype of Gaņeśa. It seems that Ganesa's image with all his lakshanas did not take form before the Gupta period, though a deity with elephant face was probably known earlier. In the chapter on Pratimalakshana in the Bṛhatsamhitā of Varāhamihira the iconographic description of the god occurs last in one or two manuscripts. It was regarded by Kern as an interpolation² who did not include it in his edition of the Brhatsamhita on account of its suspect nature. All these facts led R.G. Bhandarkar to the conclusion that the worship of Gaņeśa, son of Durgā-Pārvatī, originated after the late Gupta period.³ However, according to J.N. Banerjea the reliefs depicting the elephant-headed and pot-bellied divinity undoubtedly go back to the early Gupta age, if not earlier still.4 Coomaraswamy also refers to an image of sixth century from Bhumara. In this image Ganesa appears with his four arms and a divine consort.5

As regards the antiquity of the Gāṇapatya sect, Varāhamihira in his enumeration of the Paurāṇika sects does not include the name of the Gāṇapatyas. No other early literary data about its existence is available. However, in some texts of a comparatively late date the sect is included in the list of the Pañchapūjakas⁶.

Evolution of the Various Facets of the Personality of Ganesa

Owing to the paucity of textual references, it is not possible to trace in detail the various stages of the development of the personality of Ganesa. Crooke saw in Ganesa a Dravidian solar God.⁷

¹Ibid.

^{*}PTR, p. 151.

Bhandarkar, VSMR, p. 214.

⁴Banerjea, J.N., *DHI*, p. 354, n. 1. According to D.C. Sircar (*EI*, XXXV, p. 46) the antiquity of Ganesa goes back to 3rd or 4th century A.D. Cf. also *IHQ*, XIX, p. 14, n. 7; Hopkins, *Epic Mythology*, pp. 206-7.

⁵Gupta, op. cit., p. 58.

⁶Ādityam Gaṇanātham cha Devīm Rudram cha Kesavam /

Pañchadaivatamityuktam sarva karmasu pūjayet ||

⁷Crooke, W., Popular Religions and Folklore of Northern India, London, 1896, p. 287.

He was supported by De Gubernatis who also suggested that the rat symbolises night or darkness which the sun destroys. Monier-Williams placed Ganesa and Kārttikeya at the head of the tutelary village divinities (grāma-devatās) who guard the household and control good and evil deeds. Such speculations apart, the origin and development of the personality of Gānesa may best be understood with reference to his name, physical features and the ideas he represents—that is the appelative, physical and conceptual aspects of his personality.

Ganesa: the Siva Element

In the Amarokosha, usually assigned to the Gupta period, the synonyms of Ganapati-Vināyaka are given thus:

Vināyako-Vighnarāja-Dvaimātura-Gaṇādhipāḥ | Apyekadanta-Heramba-Lambodara-Gajānanāḥ. ||²

The literal meaning of Ganeśa or Ganapati is 'the leader of the Ganas' who are almost invariably associated with Śiva. Rudra, the Vedic counterpart of Śiva, has been associated with Marutganas. It is true that Ganeśvara also occurs as one of the names of Vishnu among the one thousand names of the god (Vishnusahasranāma) given in the Anuśāsanaparvan of the Mbh., but as some appellations of Śiva are undoubtedly used in this stotra for Vishnu, it may easily be surmised that the title Ganeśvara was also taken from the Śaiva mythology. From these facts emerges the possibility that originally Ganeśa was merely another aspect ot Śiva which in course of time was separately deified. The Vedic tradition recorded in the Trayambaka Homa of the YV and the Taittirīya and Tāndya Brāhmanas, which assign mūshaka or rat

¹Gubernatis, Zoological Mythology, p. 68 (Quoted by S. K.Gupta, op. cit., p. 55).

²Most of these names are self-explanatory. Heramba means a butfalo. It indirectly connects Ganeśa with Yama who rides a butfalo and with Pārvatī-Durgā who killed a butfalo-demon. Cf. S. Bhattacharji, The Indian Theogony, p. 184, n. 1. Dvaimātūra means 'son of two mothers'—probably of Pārvatī and Gangā. 'Lambodara' means pot-bellied. In Hindu iconography pot-belly evokes 'the lower gods' while 'high gods' are usually described as sinha kaṭi (lionwaisted). Kubera-Vaiśravaṇa is also described iconographically as pot-bellied. The very word Kubera, literally means an ugly body—Ku meaning ugly and bera meaning body or tanu.

to Rudra as his vāhana¹, also points to this possibility. The elephant head of Gaņeśa may also be explained by referring to the animal faces of the Mahāparishadas of Rudra as described in the Skandābhisheka chapter of the Śalyaparvan of the Mbh. These parishadas (gaṇas), who are described in this context as so many attendants of Skanda, bear the faces of various animals and birds such as tortoise, cock, crow, owl, parrot, falcon, dog, fox, boar, elephant, lion, etc. In the Śiva temple of Bhumara (c. 6th century A.D.) are depicted the figures of many gaṇas with faces of various animals and birds on its walls.

Some other links of Ganeśa with Śiva may here be pointed out. His name Gajānana recalls Śiva killing the elephant demon Gajāsura and the appellation Nṛtyagaṇapati connects Gaṇeśa with Śiva Naṭarāja and his dancing hosts. In the Atharvaśirsha Upanishad mention is made of Vināyaka among the many gods or spirits with whom Rudra is identified, and Vināyaka is one of the names of Ganeśa in the Purāṇas.

The iconography of Ganeśa also links him with the gods of the Śiva complex. For example among the earliest Ganeśa images is included an image found near Kabul. It contains an inscription in the script of sixth-seventh century A.D. stating that this image of Mahāvināyaka was installed by Shāhi Khingala. The four hands, tusk and trunk of the image are now broken but it depicts a snake as a yajñopavīta and tiger's head on its undergarment (to suggest that the deity is wearing tiger skin). The god is depicted as ūrdhvameḍha. All these features of Ganeśa iconography are found in Śiva images also.²

Gaņeśa: the Vināyaka Element

R.G. Bhandarkar traces the beginning of Ganeśa worship to the veneration paid by the ancient Indians to 'imps and evil spirits' collectively described as Vināyakas in the Mānava Gṛhyasūtra,

¹Cf. Yaduvamsi, Śaiva Mata, pp. 14, 18.

²EI, XXXV, p. 46. For the connection of Ganesa with the cult of Mother Goddess, cf. Dange, Sadasiva A., 'The Birth of Ganapati', in *Aruna Bhāratī* ed. by B. Datta, pp. 1-7. Dange believes that *sindūra* and red garments of Ganesa and the dirt of his mother are nothing but mythical superimposition to indicate his birth from mother earth.

Yājñavalkyasmṛti, Mbh., the Agni, Brahma and the Varāha P. etc. In the Anuśasanaparvan of the Mbh. Ganeśvaras and Vināyakas are described alongwith other gods as the lords of all the worlds (İsvarah Sarvalokānām Ganeśvara-Vināyakāh), and, properly propitiated, they remove all obstacles from the path of men. They are prone to possess men and women, make them failures in life and put obstacles in their performance of good deeds. Men possessed by them are faced with all sorts of evils and frustrations. Many purificatory ceremonies are enjoined to be performed for getting rid of their influence and attaining success. According to the Mānava Grhyasūtra (II.14) Vināyakas are four in number. Their names are (1) Śalakatankata, (2) Kushmandarajaputra (3) Ushmita and (4) Devayajana. The text also describes a ceremony which frees persons haunted by the Vināyakas. Yājñavalkya in his Smrti (I.27 ff.) describes the same ceremony but in a somewhat more developed and complicated form. It clearly asserts that Rudra appointed one Vināyaka with six different aspects or forms (Mita, Sammita, Śala, Katankata, Ushmita and Devayajana) as the leader of his Ganas, and that Vināyaka was the son of Ambikā (Ambikāputra). The difference between the two texts shows that during the period that elapsed between the composition of the Sūtra and that of the Smṛti, the four Vināyakas had become one, Ganapati-Vināyaka, who had Ambikā for his mother. It will also be seen that in his own nature this god was conceived as an unfriendly or malignant spirit, but capable of being made friendly and benignant (Vighnavināśana and Siddhidātā) by propitiatory rites. In this respect he resembled Rudra himself. That the worship of Vinayakas had come into existence before the Christian era is proved by the occurrence of the ceremony mentioned above in a Grhyasūtra. But the concept of one Ganapati-Vināyaka, the son of Ambikā, was obviously introduced into the Hindu pantheon much later.

Ganeśa: Bṛhaspati-Brahmanaspati Element

As noted above the name Ganapati alone occurring in some Samhitā, texts would not prove any allusion to the Paurānika Ganeśa in these works. The adjective ganapati was used also for the Vedic gods Brhaspati and Brahmanaspati, who were different from the Paurāņika Gaņeśa-Gaņapati. But a deliberate identification was

made much later when the orthodox tradition sought to establish Vedic antecedents of Ganapati-Ganesa with the help of such passages.1 According to Rao, the reputation of Ganesa as a god of wisdom was the result of a confusion between Ganeśa and the Vedic god Brahmanaspati2 while R.G. Bhandarkar identifies him with the celestial guru Brhaspati himself.3 In any case this reputation seems to have been at the root of the legend about Ganesa serving as the scribe of Vyāsa at the suggestion of Brahmā (Mbh., Adiparvan). It is said that Ganesa did not appreciate the idea of serving as Vyāsa's scribe. Therefore, he put the condition that he would write down the poem provided Vyāsa dictated it in such a manner that he had not to lay down his pen even once before the task was completed. To this Vyāsa put the counter-condition that he would dictate without pause provided Ganapati wrote down every verse only when he had understood its meaning. As P.C. Bagchi suggests, it may be that Ganesa was associated with writing, because of a confusion regarding the word 'siddhi'. From very ancient times, the Hindu alphabet was called 'Siddham' and enumeration of the alphabet began with the word Siddhi. As one of the epithets of Ganesa is Siddhidātā, Bagchi thinks it probable that his association with the word gave rise to the legend of his serving as a scribe.

In the South Indian version of the *Mbh*. there is no mention of this legend or of Gaṇeśa. No ancient fresco or sculpture depicts him as a scribe.⁴ However, Getty mentions two such paintings—one Nepalese and the other Rajput. The Nepalese painting is in a text name *Gāyatrī Tantra* which is supposed to be a dictation of mantras to Gaṇeśa by his father Śiva.⁵ According to some scholars the legend of Gaṇeśa's scribehood was incorporated in the North Indian version of the *Mbh*. in the middle of the eleventh century though Winternitz believes that it was known long before the ninth century A.D.

Here we may refer to another legend concerning Ganesa's intelligence. According to it Siva conducted a test for his sons,

¹Cf. Kalyāņa, Śrī Gaņeśānka.

²Gupta, S.K., op. cit., p. 60.

^{*}VSMR, p. 212; cf. Sinha, B.C., Hinduism and Symbol Worship, Ch. 11.

^{&#}x27;Gupta, op. cit.

Ibid.

Ganeśa and Karttikeya. Śiva and Parvatī told them that he who returned first after going round the whole world would be married first. Accordingly Karttikeya mounted on his vāhana peacock and set out for a tour round the world. Ganesa did nothing of the sort. After a while he only went round his parents explaining that since the whole universe existed in his parents, Siva and Parvatī, going round them tantamounted to touring round the world. Needless to state that it was Genesa who won the competition.

Ganesa: Yaksha-Nāga (Elephant) Elements

The most prominent physical feature of Ganesa is his elephanthead and, therefore, originally he must have been associated with the elephant cult. His divine personality fails to conceal his animal origin. The rope of binding the elephant i.e. pāśa and the instrument for goading the same i.e. ankuśa, which are often wielded by Ganesa suggest that the deity was formerly worshipped to protect the devotees from any harm that might come from wild elephants. Most likely the worship of the elephant-headed Ganeśa arose in regions infested with wild elephants. The belief in the extraordinary intelligence of Ganesa is easily related with his elephant head for elephant is also popularly believed to have human qualities and intelligence.

Another explanation of the characteristic physical appearance of Ganapati may be sought in the fact that he combined in him some of the characteristic traits of both the Yakshas and the Nāgas. Coomaraswamy pointed out long ago that Ganeśa was undoubtedly a Yaksha-type, and an elephant-headed Yaksha is to be found in an Amaravatī coping. Gaņeśa possesses the head of a Nāga in the sense of an elephant ('nāga' means a snake as well as an elephant). His potbelly (tundila) is also a characteristic which he shares with the Yakshas. It resembles a pitcher, 'containing all prosperity'. It is believed that he may fulfil all the desires. Although he is not included in any of the lists of Yakshas, yet he may be equivalent to Kubera or Manibhadra.

Stories of the Birth of Ganeśa

Purāņas like the Śiva, Linga, Varāha, Skanda, Brahmavaivartta, etc., and the Agamas like the Suprabhedagama give different accounts of the birth of Ganesa. T.A. Gopinatha

Rao has collected a good many stories on this topic from these texts in which the god is said to have been born solely to Siva, solely to Pārvatī, and to both Siva and Pārvatī and also held to be Kṛṣhṇa in another form.¹ These stories reflect the attempts of the later mythologists to bring this cult-god in line with the more important cult deities, Siva and Sakti, of much earlier origin.

According to one legend, once Siva and Pārvatī assumed elephant forms and wandered over hills and dales for ages, experiencing the delights of animal life. Therefore, they are known as Mātanga and Mātangī. Ganeśa, the elephant-headed deity. is the offspring born during this period of their love life.² According to another legend contained in the Padma P. Ganeśa is the son of Siva and Pārvatī, or rather of the latter, for he was produced from the unguents with which the goddess had anointed herself. He had four arms and five elephant heads. Siva declared him to be the son of Pārvatī. He reduced his five heads to one and enthroned him on Añjanagiri as the 'remover of obstacles'.

According to the Linga Purāṇa Gaṇeśa was born as the elephant-headed god from the womb of Pārvatī, while according to the Vāmana P. he was born from the sweat of Śiva and Pārvatī and was given the name of Vināyaka because Pārvatī created him without a husband (vinā nāyakena).

According to the *Brahmavaivartta P*. when Siva and Pārvatī were making love, Vishņu took the form of a thirsty Brāhmaṇa. Siva arose, and his seed fell on the bed instead in the womb of his wife. However, Siva and Pārvatī offered the Brāhmaṇa food and water. Thereupon the Brāhmaṇa vanished and took the form of a child and went to Pārvatī's bed. There he became mixed with the seed of Siva. Pārvatī found the child, nursed him and gave him the name of Gaṇeśa. Later it is said that the head of Gaṇeśa fell off when Pārvatī, in her pride, invited the planet Sani to look at her baby. Vishṇu afterwards revived him with the head of an elephant. The Siva P. seeks to explain Gaṇeśa's epithet Gajānana. It narrates that when bathing Pārvatī created Gaṇeśa from her sweat and appointed him to guard her apartment. But when Gaṇeśa refused to let Siva enter the apartment the

¹Gopinatha Rao, T.A., Elements of Hindu Iconography, I, p. 35-46. ⁸Gupta, S.K., op. cit., p. 56.

enraged husband summoned one of his ganas who decapitated Ganesa. Finally Siva had to appeal to 'the gods of the north' to make good Ganesa's loss with the head of the first animal they encountered. This happened to be an elephant and hence Ganesa's elephant head.1

Sect and Sub-sects of the Ganapatyas

The sect of the Ganapatyas came to have as many as six subdivisions. One has to cull information about them from Sankaradigviiava of Ānandagiri, also called Anantānandagiri, and from the commentary called *Dindima* by Dhanapati on the corresponding work of Mādhava.2 These texts are of late medieval period, and purport to give details about the encounter of the leaders of six sub-sects of the Ganapatyas with Sankara. These six subsects respectively worshipped Mahā-, Haridrā-, Uchchhishta-, Navanīta-, Svarņa-, and Santāna- Gaņapati and were led respectively by Girijāsuta, Ganapatikumūra, Herambasuta and three others. Sankara defeated them all one after another at a place called Ganavara on the bank of the river Kaumudī. Before they were defeated each of them extolled the greatness of the particular form of Ganapati he venerated and described it as the creator of the Brahmanical triad, endowing it with their respective functions. According to them, that Ganeśa is the greatest god is mentioned even in the Taittirīya Āranyaka—Om Vighnarājāya vidmahe vakratundāya dhīmahi tanno dantī prachodayāt. J.N. Banerjea rightly believes that this was a very late interpolation in the $T\overline{A}$, probably of the late Gupta or post-Gupta age.3 Those who adored Mahāgaņapati had Girijāsuta as their leader. They regarded Mahāganapati as the one who alone remains when Brahmadeva and others have been destroyed at the time of dissolution and who by his own wonderful powers creates Brahmadeva and others. One

¹For details vide Kalyāņa, Śrī Gaņeśānka, p. 198 ff. See Paul Courtright, B., 'The Beheading of Ganesa', Purāna, XXII, i, pp. 67-80.

Supra; PTR, p. 154. Incidentally it shows that interpolations were made in later ages even in the Vedic texts.

Bhandarkar, VSMR, p. 212 f.; Lakshminarasimha Sastri, S., Bhagavan Gaņeśa in the Tradition of Bhagavān Śankarāchārya', Kalyana Kalpataru, 34, pt. 4, 1974, pp. 109-15.

who repeats the original mantra and meditates on Mahāgaņapati, attains supreme bliss.

The worshippers of Haridraganapati were led by Ganapatikumāra. They took their stand on RV. II.23.1, and interpreted this text to mean "We meditate on thee who art the leader of the group of Rudra, Vishņu, Brahman, Indra and others, and art the instructor of sages Bhrgu, Guru, Sesa and others, the highest of all who know the sciences, the greatest lord of the Brahmanas engaged in the creation of the world, i.e. adorned by Brahman and others in the work of creation and others".1 They believed that Haridraganapati should be worshipped and meditated upon as being dressed in a yellow silken garment, bearing a yellow sacred thread, having four arms, three eyes, with his face suffused over by turmeric (haridrā) ointment, and holding a pāśa, an ankuśa and a danda in his hands. He who worships the god in this form, obtains emancipation. The worshipper of Haridraganapati should bear, on both of his arms, the marks of Ganapati's face and one tooth impressed by a heated iron stamp.2

Herambasuta, another leader of the Gāṇapatya sect, was the worshipper of Uchchhishtagaṇapati. The followers of this sub-sect resorted to the left-handed path (Vāmamārga) which was set up obviously in imitation of the Kaula worship of Śakti. They described their god as three-eyed and four-armed (holding a noose, an elephant-goad and a club in three hands, and raising the fourth in the abhayamudrā) seated on a mahāpītha with the tip of his trunk applied to a pot of strong wine and engaged in kissing and embracing his Śakti sitting on his left lap. They observed no distinction of caste and saṃskāras like marriage, allowed promiscuous intercourse and also the use of wine. They put on a red mark on forehead. All the ordinary ceremonies, such as twilight adorations (sandhyāvandana) were left by them to a man's choice.

The followers of the other three Gaṇapatis—Navanīta, Svarṇa, and Santāna, worshipped their god, it is said, according to the Sruti. They argued that since Gaṇapati is adored in the beginning of every religious act, other gods are part of him. They regarded the whole world as Gaṇapati and worshipped him as such.

¹Bhandarkar, op. cit., p. 213.

^{*}Ibid., p. 212.

R.G. Bhandarkar and J.N. Banerjea are rightly critical of the authenticity of this detailed account of the Ganapatyas and their six sub-divisions existing in the time of Sankara. Ganapatya sect was certainly there when Sankara preached advaita philosophy, but it is doubtful whether it had attained so much elaboration by that time.

Iconography of Ganeśa

Most of the iconographic texts, if not all, describing the general form of Ganapati characterise him as four-armed, the only exception being the Brhatsamhitā chapter (57) on Pratimalakshana which describes the earliest variety of his image in this manner: 'The lord of the Pramathas (the same as the Ganas) should be elephant-faced, pot-bellied, holding a hatchet and a radish, and should have one tooth'. As maintained by Banerjea this no doubt is the description of a two armed image. Of course there is no mention here of a pot of sweet-meat (modaka bhānda) but the 'radish' or the bulbous root (mūlakakanda) which is mentioned here is the edible of an elephant. The peculiar trait of 'one tooth' (eka vishāṇa) noted here gave rise to the later explanatory myths.1 The couplet enumerating the various synonyms of Ganapati in the Amarakosha also contains a reference to the one-tooth, elephant-head and pot-belly of the god (Vināyaka - Vighnarāja - Dvaimātura - Gaņādhipāḥ / Apyekadanta-Heramba-Lambodara-Gajānanāh). The other texts like Amsumadbhedāgama, Uttarakāmikāgama, Suprabhedāgama, Vishnudharmottara, Rūpamandana etc. invariably endow the god with four hands, the attributes held by them being any four among the following, (svadanta), tooth' wood-apple (kapi*tha), sweet-meat (modaka), elephant-goad (ankuśa), noose (pāśa), snake (nāga). rosary, lotus, etc. In these later texts, mouse is very often described as his mount, and his consorts are sometimes mentioned as Bharati (another name of Sarasvati, the goddess of learning), Śrī (Lakshmī), Vighneśvarī, Buddhi and Kubuddhi. characteristic traits which can be gathered from these texts are his three eyes, his slightly bent (abhanga) or straight (samabhanga) pose when standing (sthānaka), tiger-skin garment (vyāgracharmāmbaradhara), and sacred thread made of a serpent (vyālayajñopa-Many are the iconographic varieties of the god described in the different texts under such names as Bija-Ganapati, Bala-Gaņapati, Taruņa-Gaņapati, Vīra-Vighneśa, Śakti-Gaņeśa, Lakshmī-Gaņeśa, Mahā-Gaņeśa, Haridrā-Gaņeśa, Unmatta-Vināyaka, Nṛtya-Gaṇapati, Uchchhishṭa-Gaṇapati, Heramba-Gaṇapati (with five heads and ten arms, seated on a roaring lion), Ganapati with Siddhi and Buddhi by his side, Gaņeśa with Sapta-Mātṛkās etc.1 Banerjea rightly points out that the names of the cult images of some of the sub-divisions of the Ganapatya sect can be recognised in this list, and some forms of the god like Sakti or Unmatta-Uchchhishta-Gaṇapati seem to be associated with the left-handed (Vāmāchāra or Tantrika) variety of his worship. Only a few of the aforesaid forms are actually met with in the Gupta and post-Gupta medieval art, and they are thus of great interest.2

The two most popular feature of the iconography of Ganeśa are his one tusk (ekadanta) and the turning direction of his trunk. The absence of his other tusk is explained in different texts differently. According to some it was lost in a battle between Śiva and Ganeśa and according to others the elephant-head which was put on his torso originally had only one tusk. In any case, according to canons he should be depicted with only one tusk (ekadanta) on the right side. But, as Getty has pointed out, there are some images which have the tusk on the left side or have both the tusks. The god is even found as having three tusks which however is a most unusual occurrence. The direction of his trunk is regarded more important in South India. There, when it turns to the left, he is called Idamburi and when it turns to the right, he is called Valamburi. A

Philosophy of the Gāṇapatya Sect

The best exposition of the philosophy of the Gāṇapatya sect is found in the $Ganeśagīt\bar{a}$ which forms a part of the Ganeśa P. The

¹Cf. AIK, p. 347 f.

²DHI, p. 358.

³Gupta, S.K., op. cit., p. 58,

Ibid.

Ganesa P. describes Ganesa as the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the world, as Mahavishņu, Sadasiva, Mahabrahma and Mahaśakti. Vishņu, Šiva, Brahmā all originate from Gaņeśa. In its final colophon the Ganeśagītā is described as Yogāmṛtārtha Śāstra and it is in the form of a samvāda between Lord Gajānana and King Varenya who is blessed by the Lord and finds his liberation in the end. In many respects it is like the Bhagavadgītā. The eighth Chapter, entitled Viśvarūpadarśanam, almost resembles the eleventh Chapter of the Bhagavadgītā. Like Arjuna in the Bhagavadgītā King Varenya is blessed by the Lord with Jñana-chakshus or Divya-Chakshus and with them he beholds the Universal Vision which was seen only by Suka, Sanaka and Narada. In this work Lord Gaņeśa assures the devotees that it is possible to see Him, know Him and become one with Him, through devotion only. an outcaste, who worships Him with piety and devotion, becomes superior to Brahmanas. In the 7th Chapter called 'Upāsanā Yoga', different varieties of worship and japa of Ganapati Mantra are described. Mental worship (mānasī pūjā) is considered the best. Hatred of other gods is derided in strong terms.

There are two ways of worshipping Lord Ganesa. In one He is regarded as identical with the Supreme Spirit—the Paramatman and is worshipped by mystical contemplation. In the other type of worship the image of the god is adorned with flowers and other offerings (pūjā).

According to the Ganesagitā the duties enjoined in be followed without expectation of any should reward (cf. nishkāmakarmayoga of the Gītā). Conquering one's senses, one should develop equanimity of mind. The yogin who has achieved samatva is the best (cf. the samatvayoga of the Bhagavadgītā). Yoga-mārga is not easy. For this the grace of the Guru, who can lead the pupil step by step to the final goal, is necessary. Yoga is not union with fortune, kingdom, sovereignty, heaven or immortality; it is the union of the finite soul with Brahman. It can be accomplished through one-pointed meditation. Lord Ganesa assures that the devotees who approach Him through Yoga are liberated and He would never forsake them (cf. the similar assurance of Krshna in the Gītā).

According to the Ganesagitā real yoga is constant experience of Brahman (Supreme Bliss). This is brought about by abhedabuddhi. The Ganesagītā prescribes jñānayoga, with karman and bhakti as subordinate to it. Japa, saraṇāgati, dedication of all actions to the Lord and meditation generate bhakti, bhakti generates knowledge and knowledge leads to abhedabuddhi (identity-consciousness). Abhedabuddhi brings liberation. Hence this is called mokshasādhanayoga.¹

An important aspect of the philosophy of the Gāṇapatya sect is its belief in the incarnations of Gaṇeśa. It holds that like Vishṇu Gaṇeśa also takes birth age after age for the destruction of asuras and welfare of humanity. The Maudgala P. identified Gaṇeśa with Om (Om iti sabdobhūt sa vai Gajākāraḥ). The Gāṇapatyātharvaśīrsha Upa. identifies him with Brahma (tvameva sarvam khalvidam Brahmāsi).

Popularity of Ganesa

Though the cult of Ganesa never became as important as some of the other major cults, yet his worship without reference to any particular sect is practised even now by nearly all Hindus at the beginning of any naimittika karmans (occasional religious ceremonies), samskāras and also on special occasions before the main ceremony begins.² He is worshipped in every Hindu home as the lord of intellect and wisdom (Buddhidātā), the dispeller of obstacles (Vighnanāsana) and bestower of success (Siddhidātā). He is also considered to be the guardian of the public ways. Temples of Ganapati are scattered all over India. His image is almost always found in Siva temples.

The mantra uttered by the priest at the time of occasional religious ceremonies is Om Ganeśadipańchadevatābhyo namaḥ (Om, Salutation to the five devatās with Ganeśa in the forefront). This attitude was the main characteristic of the Smārta-Pańchopāsakas who, unless properly initiated into a particular major Paurānika cult like Vaishnava, Śaiva or Śākta, believed in each deity as an individual manifestation of the one Supreme Lord

¹For details vide, Sitaramaih, G., 'Śrī Gaņeśa-Gītā—its Religious and Philosophical Significance', POC, Gauhati Session, Vol. II, 1966, p. 241 ff. cf. also Agrawala, V.S., 'Meaning of Gaṇapati', JOI, XIII, pt. i, Sept. 1963, pp. 1-4. He identifies Gaṇapati with Yaksha Prajāpati or Brahmanaspati.

Bhandarkar, op.cit.

(infra, pp. 371-3). They cherish this syncretistic belief from hoary antiquity, and Ganapati worship was only one late facet of this belief.1

Gaņeśa is the only god who does not need an image to invoke him. If an image is there that is well and good; if it is not there then a small piece of earth wrapped in sacred red thread takes his In this sense he may be regarded as the god of the poor. However, innumerable images of Ganesa are found all over India.

The earliest Ganesa images are supposed to be those found in the Sankisa mound (Etah Dist., U.P.) and at Bhumara (M.P.) both of about the fifth-sixth cent. A.D. His representation on a terracotta bas-relief from Akra (Bannu Dist., Pakistan) is also assigned to the same age.2 A Kabul image of Ganesa contains an inscription in two lines. It is written in the characters of sixth or seventh century A.D., describes the image as that of Mahāvināyaka and records that it was installed by Shāhi Khingala.3 The Buddhist and Jainas also seem to have held Ganesa in great respect. The appeal of this god spread even outside India, and his images of the medieval period have been found in Nepal, China, Burma, Indo-China, Java, Borneo, Japan, and other places.4

The veneration paid to Ganeśa specially by Hindu traders and businessmen in modern times may be traced to the early medieval period. A pillar found at Ghatiyala (Jodhpur, Rajasthan) contains four images of Ganapati facing four quarters as its capital piece, and the inscription engraved on it (861 A.D.) informs us that it was erected by Kakkuka, the Pratihara king, at the end of a market at a place called Rohinsakupa for the success of the business enterprises of the local traders through the grace of this god. Two or three more such inscriptions from Ghatiyala record the same fact and one of them states that the Abhīras used to infest Rohinsakūpa and after removing this obstacle Kakkuka established there a centre of trade. This emphasizes the nature of Ganesa as the remover of obstacles.5

¹*PTR*, p. 155.

² Getty, A., Ganeśa, p. 26.

^{*}EI, XXXV, p. 47; also see V.C. Srivastava, 'Ganesa Images from Afganistan', Bhāratīya Vidyā, 40, pt. 1, pp. 14-19.

^{&#}x27;Cf. Puri, B.N., 'Ganesa and Ganapati Cult in India and South-East Asia', JIH, XLVIII, pt. 2, August 1970, p. 405-13.

⁵PTR, p. 153.

Chapter 15

Skanda-Karttikeya

Early References

Worship of Kārttikeya was known in India from a very early period. Whether the worshipper of the god considered themselves a sect or not, is difficult to be said. It is certain however that they were never given a separate status like the exclusive devotees of the five Paurāṇika deities (Pañchadevopāsakas) -Vishṇu, Śiva, Śakti, Sūrya and Gaṇapati. In the centuries immediately preceding and succeeding the birth of Christ the god was worshipped under different names or aspects, such as Skanda, Viśākha, Kumāra, Mahāsena, Brahmaṇyadeva, etc. He was, however, never included in the list of Vedic deities and belonged to the category of the Laukika-devatās.

The Baudhāyana DS (II. 5-8) provides quite early references to Skanda, Shanmukha, Jayanta, Viśākha, Subrahmanya, and Mahāsena.1 In later ages these were regarded as the various names and aspects of one deity. In the age of Patañjali Skanda and Visakha were almost certainly the names of two different deities, for while commenting on the Pāṇini's sūtra jīvikārthe chāpanye (V. 3.99) he refers to the images of Siva, Skanda and Viśakha being sold by the Mauryas in their greed for gold. argued by R.G. Bhandarkar2 if Skanda and Viśākha had denoted a single deity Patañjali would had mentioned only one name, but as he has used two names it is clear that they denoted two different gods. Even during the time of the Kushana king Huvishka Skanda and Viśakha are depicted on coins as two different deities. Further, some gold coins of Huvishka contain two figures on their reverse with the names Skanda-Kumāra and Viśākha (Vizago), while a

¹Jash, Pranabananda, 'Some Aspects of Karttikeya Worship with Special Reference to Bengal', PIHC, 1981, p. 163.

²VSMR, p. 215.

few others of the same ruler contain three figures inside some sort of a shrine, described as Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsena.1 It also proves that till that age Skanda-Kumāra, Viśākha and Mahāsena were regarded as three different deities.

Amalgamation of the Various Gods into Skanda-Kārttikeya and the Paurānika Stories of His Birth

In course of time these different divinities alongwith many others came to be known as different names of the same god. Amarakosha enumerates them as follows: Kārttikeya, Mahāsena Śarajanmā, Shadānana, Pārvatīnandana, Skanda, Senānī, Agnibhū, Guha, Bāhuleya, Tārakajit, Viśākha, Sikhivāhana, Shanmātura, Saktidhara, Kumāra and Kraunchadārana. Some of these are the names of the different deities who were identified with Skanda-Karttikeya while others are the deification of epithets which were given to him as a result of the circumstances of his birth explained mythologically in the epics, Puranas and other texts. The Rāmā. mentions Skanda as a son of Rudra, though not directly begotten by him on Pārvatī. According to this Epic Agni's seed fell in the Ganga who, unable to bear its heat, deposited it among the reeds where Skanda grew up (hence his name Śarajanmā) nursed by the six Kṛttikās (hence his names Kārttikeya and Shanmātura). The Skandotpattiparvādhyāya of the Vanaparvan of the Mbh., however, contains earlier legends about the birth of this god or a group of gods of like nature later amalgamated into one deity. Here this composite god is regarded as the son of Siva and Parvati who brought him into being for leading the army of the gods (devasenā) in their fight with the mighty Tārakāsura. In one anecdote we are told that Angiras's wife approached Agni. She deposited the seed in a golden pot among reeds on Svetaparvata. She assumed the shape of the wives of all the Saptarshis or the seven sages except that of Arundhati and deposited the seed six times. Out of this Agni's wife Svāhā brought forth a six-headed son. In one legend Devasena (an abstraction of the divine army) was looking for a suitable husband, and in Karttikeya she found her spouse. Another account says

¹PIHC, 1981, p. 164.

that Siva's seed fell in Agni. He, unable to bear it, deposited it in the Gangā, who also laid it down by the reeds. The Kṛttikā sisters saw it and each of them conceived and begot a son. Afterwards all these children became combined into one being having six heads (hence his names Shaḍānana and Shanmukha). A still later account has it that at gods' request Agni deposited his seed in the Gangā (hence his name Agnibhū) who fainted because of its unabearable power and heat. The seed 'fell' and the child born of it was Skanda (spilled); it was hidden among the reeds and was reared by the Kṛttikā sisters; so he was called Kārttikeya.

These different accounts tend to blur the true origin of Kārttikeya. Some of them make him the son of Maheśvara, some of Agni (Agnibhū), some say he was born of Umā, others say he was the son of the Krttikas (Karttikeya) and still others maintain that he was begotten on the Gangā (Gangāputra). Several other stories seek to explain other names of the deity. For instance the Mbh. relates that Viśākha arose from the right side of Skanda when the latter was struck by the thunderbolt of certain common accounts contain However, these points also: (1) direct begetting of Karttikeya by Siva or conception by Umā is usually avoided; (2) yet in each account Siva and Umā's indirect parentage is indicated; (3) direct connection is sought to be established between him and Agni, Gangā and the Kṛttikās; (4) he is said to be the destined divine general and the deliverer of the gods from demon Tāraka's menace (hence his name Tārakajit); (5) in some accounts he is connected with cocks or peacocks (hence his name Śikhivāhana).1

Non-Aryan Elements in the Personality of Skanda-Kārttikeya

From the above stories it is obvious that in course of its historical development the cult of Skanda-Kārttikeya assimilated the influences of the concepts and worship of Rudra-Śiva, Agni, Gangā, the six Kṛttikās etc. In course of time it also imbibed the elements of the worship of Brahmā, Sūrya, and a number of popular and tribal faiths. In the following pages we propose to analyse the various elements of this composite cult.

The deity Skanda-Karttikeya is unknown to the Vedas. In its

¹For details vide, Bhattacharji, S., The Indian Theogony, pp. 180-83.

formative stages his worship was probably prevalent among the non-Vedic and non-Aryan people. The Paraskara GS (I. 16. 24) represents Kumāra as a demon harassing infants. The Mbh. (Vanaparvan, 230) speaks of Skandagrahas who are no other than rākshasas. The Vāyu P. (LXIX. 191) speaks of the Skandagiahas as rākshasas fearful to children. In the AV in Skandayāga, also known as Dhūrtakalpa, the deity is associated with the peacock (yam vahanti Mayūrah), bells and banners (ghanta patakini). The tradition finds reflection in the Vishnudharmottara (III.7.5) where ghanta and patākā figure among the attributes of Skanda.1

Saiva Association

There can be hardly any doubt that by the time the major Purāņas were composed Skanda-Kārttikeya had become not only one of the leaders of the Ganas of Siva but also the son of the latter. His being the leader of the army of the gods was probably suggested by his being the leader of the Ganas of Rudra. According to a Lingayata tradition he was the founder of a gotra and was a form of Siva himself. Skanda's assimilation in the Saiva cult appears to have been principally through Ganga, Agni and the Kṛttikas. resistance to this fusion (of Siva and Karttikeya cults), which is indicated in mythology also (note that Karttikeya is hardly ever mentioned as Siva's direct issue), must have later broken down. In the HV (III. 88), where the Kumārasambhava legend (as Kālidāsa knew it) is given in brief, Skanda is the son of Siva and Pārvatī though casual references are still made that he is Agni's son reared by the Krttikas among reeds (HV, III. 41.3). One Mbh. passage mentions that at Siva's marriage the gods requested him not to deposit his seed in Parvatī and he agreed. Umā, in mortification, cursed them with sonlessness. Agni, who was not present, contained Siva's seed. The story seems to rationalize the cultic reluctance to make Kārttikeya the son of Śiva.

Association with Mayura

In most epic accounts Skanda is given the peacock by the gods. It is striking that the Sabhāparvan of the Mbh. mentions Rohitaka as the habitat of Karttikeya, and states that the place is inhabited by

¹PIHC, 1981, p. 168, n. 1.

the Mattamayūraka tribe. Here a reference is obviously made to the Yaudheya tribe famous for its warlike activities and worship of Skanda. We also have historical record of a Saiva clan called the Mattamayūras whose seat was in the Chedi country of Central India. They appear in history from the seventh century onwards. This Mattamayūra clan may have held orgiastic rituals as the word matta (literally 'drunk') seems to suggest. Whether it also held mayūra or peacock in esteem is difficult to say. Anyway, the relationship between the warrior-god and the peacock—which might have been the totem or mark of the Yaudheya tribe—is quite established. According to J.N. Banerjea originally Kārttikeya enjoyed an independent cultic status. It was later that his worship became completely merged in that of Siva in northern India of the post-Gupta period, with the result that separate shrines were seldom dedicated to this deity.

Vaishnava Association

The association of Skanda with war was a fairly old idea. It connects him with Vaishnavism also. In the Gītā (X. 24) Kṛshṇa is made to say that He is Skanda among warriors (senānīnāmaham Skandaḥ). The Visḥnudharmottara (III. 71.7) also states that four-souled eternal god Vāsudeva manifested himself as Kumāra (also four formed—Skanda, Kumāra, Viśākha and Guha) for leading the divine army.³

Cock Motif and the Solar Association of Skanda-Karttikeya

The solar association of Skanda-Kārttikeya becomes evident by his cock (kukkuṭa) motif which has been intimately associated with him since very early times. The Mbh. (III. 228-33) refers to śakti, tāmrachūḍa, kukkuṭāstra and śaṅkha as his attributes. It is also stated that his flag was kukkuṭa given to him by Agni. The same text describes kukkuṭa as his toy (III. 231.16). In the Vāyu P. (LXX II.46) Kārttikeya receives mayūra and kukkuṭa as toys from

¹Mirashi, V.V., 'The Śaiva Āchāryas of the Mattamayūra Clan', IHQ, XXV, i, 1950; also cf. PTR, p. 104 f.

[₽]*DHI*, p. 364.

³DHI, p. 365, n. 1.

Biswas, D.K., 'The Cock Motif in Skanda Worship', JAIH, I, pp. 9-16.

Vishnu. The Matsya P. and the Padma P. say that kukkuta was a gift to him from Tvashir. The Skanda P. (I. ii., 29, 138) gives Kukkutin as one of his names, describes kukkuta as his vahana in his war against Taraka, states that his banner was decorated with kukkuta and narrates that it was given to him by the Ocean (and on another occasion by Aruna). The Mbh. and the Vāmana P. list Kukkuţikā as one of his female attendants. Several iconographical texts such as the Uttarakāmikāgama, Amsubhedāgama, Kumāratantrāgama, Vishņudharmottara etc. lay down that the figure of a kukkuta should be associated with the image of Karttikeya and a number of Karttikeya images holding the kukkuta have actually been found.1

Now, as pointed out by D.K. Biswas, the cock has been associated from very early times with the rising sun.² The two Yajurveda Samhitās refer to the formula kṛkavākuḥ Savitraḥ (cock is sacred to sun) and the Nirukta of Yaska explains that the cock is sacred to the sun because he announces the time of sun (by crying out at sunrise).3 In the Puranas and the HV the sun gives Yama, his son, a kṛkavāku (kukkuṭa) to devour the worms when Yama's leg is eaten by them as a result of the curse of Chhāyā. Thus the association of Skanda with kukkuta brings him into close relationship with the sun. It is supported by the Vishnu P. according to which sakti or lance of Karttikeya is made of the rays of the sun; by the Bhavishya P. which identifies Skanda with Rājan, an attendant of the sun; by the Matsya P. which associates Skanda with Navagraha worship and by the Mbh. according to which the sun gave Subhrāja and Bhāskara, his two attendants. to Karttikeya. In this connection it is also interesting to note that the Lala Bhagat pillar, which has a cock capital (now detached) and bears an incription Kumāravara... in the characters of the 2nd cent. A.D., contains a figure of Sūrya riding a chariot drawn by four horses (cf. p. 369).

Skanda as a God of Learning

Skanda-Karttikeya is also associated with wisdom, learning

¹Ibid.

^{*}Ibid.

Ibid.

and literary activities. At one place the Mbh. (XII. 37.12) identifies him with Sanatkumāra. This tradition may be traced to the Chhāndogya Upa. (VII.26) where Sanatkumāra, the instructor of Nārada in Brahmavidyā, is described as the same as Skanda. It gave rise to the concept of Skanda as 'instructor god' which is specially found in the South. According to J.N. Banerjea one variety of the images of Kārttikeya (or Subrahmanya, as he is known in the South) is known as Deśika-Subrahmanya in which form he taught Praṇava or the Vedic lore to his father Śiva. The Kūrma P. also describes him as an authority on Brahmavidyā. In the Śiva P. he is extolled as Jñānaśaktidhara. Several other texts associate him with Vedānta by describing him as Vedāntārthavid. He is also represented as the promulgator of the meaning of the Praṇava mantra to the sage Vāmadeva.²

Skanda as Amorous God

Another significant later addition to the features of Skanda-Kārttikeya is his representation as an amorous god and also as the deity of the devadāsīs and gaņikās. The Skanda P. relates how he was sent by Šiva to destroy Daksha's sacrifice and how at the instigation of Daksha beautiful damsels delayed his journey by entertaining him in the way with dances and songs. The Rājataraṅgiṇī describes the devadāsīs associated with the Kārttikeya temple of Puṇḍravardhana where King Jayāpīda of Kashmir took shelter during his wanderings. The Purāṇas narrate that Skanda dallied with the wives of other gods who reported the matter to Pārvatī. Being unable to dissuade him from doing so, Pārvatī warned him that wherever he would go he would find his mother. This made him to turn into an ascetic.

Contribution of the Southern Seyon-Murugan Worship

The worship of Seyon-Murugan was prevalent in the South since very ancient times.³ His earliest name occurring in the old

¹DHI, p. 365, n. 1.

^{*}PIHC, 1981, p. 169, fn. 20.

³Agrawala, P.K., 'Skanda in the Purāņas and Classical Literature', *Purāņa*, VIII, i, Jan. 1966, pp. 135-58.

Tamil hymns is Seyon (red-complexioned). His wife Vallī was conceived as a hill girl belonging to the hill tribe of Kuravas. rode a peacock and the temples dedicated to him had cock-banners on their tops. Most likely Murugan was a hill deity of non-Aryan origin. Soon his cult became identified with that of Skanda. identification had been at least partly affected by the time the Śilappadikāram was composed (c. 2nd cent. A.D.) which describes Murugan as the six-faced, twelve-armed son of Siva and Pārvatī. From the Śangama texts also it appears that the myths, legends and cults of Seyon-Murugan and Kumāra-Skanda had become mingled by that time.1 The concepts of Valli and kukkuța-vāhana god probably came from or were strengthened by the Seyon-Murugan cult.

Other Links and Elements

In course of time Skanda-Kārttikeya became associated with a number of humble folk deities. Like his mythological father Rudra of the YV, Skanda also became god par excellence of thieves and robbers. In the Kathāsaritsāgara he is described the god of bandits. In the Skandayaga he is called Dhūrta, that is god of knavery. His association with the guru of thieves and robbers is also mentioned in the Mrchchhakatika of Śūdraka (Act III).

Skanda is sometimes described as goat-headed (Chāgavaktra) (cf. the elephant-headed form of his mythological brother Gaņeśa). It suggests that at some stage of his development he assimilated some tribal deity conceived in the form of a goat.

The popularity of Skanda was further enhanced by his equation with Naigameśa who could grant the boon of child to barren women and who was regarded as the protector of children. earlier association with non-Aryan deities which were believed to afflict new born babe and mother was thus later transformed (cf. the transformation of Ganeśa from the 'god of obstacles' into the 'remover of obstacles').

Popularity of Skanda-Kārttikeya

The archaeological evidence for the prevalence of Skanda-

Kārttikeya worship is found from the first century A.D. As noted above, on the reverse of the coins of the Kushana emperors Kanishka and Huvishka are found the figures and names of Some 1st century A.D. Skanda-Kumāra, Mahāsena and Viśākha. copper coins of Ayodhyā issued by the local Mitra kings, Devamitra and Vijayamitra, show a cock-crested column as their reverse device. It was also probably connected with the worship of Skanda. However, the most interesting numismatic evidence about his worship is supplied by the Yaudheya coins of about the 2nd-3rd century A.D. The Yaudheyas appear to have been the exclusive worshippers of Mahāsena-Kārttikeya. In a Mbh. passage Rohitaka, the city of the Yaudheyas, here named Mattamayūrakas, is called the favourite residence of Karttikeya where Arjuna waged a great war against them. This place having been the favourite residence of the deity means that he was tutelary god of the locality. This is supported by the evidence of the Mahāmāyūrī which states that 'Kumāra-Kārttikeya, was the world-famed (tutelary deity) of Rohitaka' (Rohitake Kārttikeyaḥ Kumāro lokaviśrutah).

The coins of the Yaudheyas1 contain the figure of Karttikeya, sometimes one- and at other times six-headed (Shadānana), carrying a spear (śakti) and a cock or peacock in its two hands. legend on some of the Yaudheya coins can be correctly read as Brahmanyadevasya Kumārasya, '(coin of) Bhagavato Svāmino Brahmanyadeva Kumāra, the worshipful lord'. It suggests that these were issued in the name of Brahmanyadeva Kumāra who was regarded as the spiritual and temporal head of the Yaudheya state. The Yaudheyas were āyudhajīvī Kshatriyas (i.e. 'Kshatriyas living by their weapons'). It was but natural for them to dedicate their state to their divine war-lord. This interpretation is substantiated by a terracotta seal (c. 3rd-4th cent. A.D.) unearthed by Marshall at Bhita,2 the inscription on which records another instance of the dedicaton of a state to Mahāsena. legend reads Śrī-Vindhyavedhamahārājasya Maheśvara-Mahāsenātisrshtarājyasya Vṛshadhvajasya Gautamīputrasya meaning 'of the

¹Singh, O.P., Religion and Iconography in Early Indian Coins, Varanasi, 1978, pp. 70-78.

²PTR, p. 148.

illustrious Mahārāja Gautamīputra Vṛshadhvaja, the penetrator of the Vindhyas, who had made over his kingdom to the great lord Kārttikeva'.1

As regards epigraphical references to Kārttikeya worship, a Kumāra sthāna or shrine of the god Kumāra (Kārttikeya) is mentioned in an Abbottabad inscription of about the third century A.D.² The second century A.D. stone objects consisting of a broken pillar of red sandstone and a cock carved in the round in the same material (undoubtedly the capital of the column) were found at Lala Bhagat (Kanpur Dist. U.P.). The pillar was most likely erected in front of a temple of the god. Among the pillar carvings prominence is given to the figure of Sūrya riding a chariot drawn by four horses. The pillar contains an inscription which refers to Kumāravara. The Bilsad stone pillar inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I records the addition of a pratolī by one Dhruvasarman to the already existing temple of Brahmanyadeva Svāmī Mahāsena.³ Though described in many of his coin legends as Paramabhāgavata, Kumāragupta I seems to have also been a worshipper of Karttikeya, for on the reverse of some of his gold coins is depicted a beautiful image of the god riding on his peacock mount. The Bihar pillar inscription of the time of Kumāragupta I4 also contains a reference to the shrine of Bhadraryya and mentions Skanda and the Divine Mothers in that connection.

The position of Skanda was obviously quite high in the Gupta age. The various aspects of his cult and personality were elaborated in this age; the legend of his birth as found in the Purāņas and the Kumārasambhava of Kālidāsa prove it. The legend of the killing of Taraka, unknown in the pre-Gupta age and first briefly noticed in the Vāyu P., is elaborated in this period (in the Mbh. the rival of Tāraka is Mahishāsura).

One of the earliest images of Skanda comes from Mahasthangarh (1st-2nd cent. A.D.). In fact the bulk of early images of the deity are found in north Bengal and the adjoining regions -

¹Ibid.

^{*}Ibid., p. 148; Sircar, D.C., EI, XXX, p. 59ff.

Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, Meerut, 1984, p. 131 ff.

^{&#}x27;Ibid., p. 196 ff. Some scholars ascribe this record to Skandagupta or Purugupta. We believe that its first part belongs to Kumāragupta I.

Pundravardhana being one of the main centres of his worship. The Garuda P. refers to this place as a sacred tīrtha of Kārttikeya. The Rājatarangiṇī also refers to a famous temple of Kārttikeya near Pundravardhana. In an inscription of Khoṭṭiga dated 967 A.D. reference is made to a Gauda Brāhmaṇa who devoted himself to popularising the worship of Kārttikeya in the Kanarese District. 1

In the extant late Gupta and medieval north Indian images Kārttikeya is usually shown as two- or four-armed, riding on his peacock mount and is sometimes attended by his two consorts. viz. Devasenal and Valli. As regards literature, several holy observances and vows in the name of Kumāra and Kārttikeya are mentioned in Hemādri's Vratakhanda. His worship has not become obsolete even at the present day. In the autumnal worship of Durgā, the clay image of the god (kshanikas) alongwith those of Durgā and her other children are worshipped in Bengal. Skanda's clay image is also separately worshipped every year on the last day of the month of Karttika by people wishing progency and by the town.2 Skanda, known as Subrahmanya of women (evidently derived from the earlier name Brahmanyadeva), was worshipped in medieval times in South India also and some shrines of the god of the period are still found there and the Tamil songs composed in his honour are full of noble and beautiful sentiments.

¹*PIHC*, 1981, p. 169 ff. ³*DHI*, p. 364.

Chapter 16

Other Gods and Cults

Syncretistic Tendencies and Smarta Panchayatana Püja

Attempts at re-conciliation and rapproachment between the rival creeds were made in India from a very early period. The Rgvedic rshis rightly emphasised that the sages call the one eternally existing principle in various ways (ekam sat viprā bahudhā vadanti) and the names denoting this principle may be different, such as Indra, Agni, the celestial sun-bird Garutman, Yama, Matariśva, post-Samhita period many factors to the continuance of this tendency. The Asokan ideal of samavāya and the Jaina philosophy of anekanta were expressions of the same thinking. The spread of Vedantic teachings among the worshippers of the various creeds was not a little responsible for the growth of a liberal religious outlook. Smrti works like those of Manu and Yājñavalkya did not advocate the cause of any cult in particular and inculcated among the devotees of different sects (who also followed the injunctions laid down in these Smrti works) a liberal The early foreign immigrants into India (the Sakas, the Pahlavas, the Kushāņas and the Hūṇas) who were presumably less cultured than the Indians and were therefore prone to the influence of the latter, especially in matters of religion, usually paid equal homage to gods and goddesses of more than one creed. Their kings often used as devices on their coins the figures of deities belonging to different pantheons. Kanishka's affiliation with Buddhism for example is sufficiently established by the Chinese literary data, but in the medley of the devices on his coins, many scholars recognise his eclecticism in religious matters. this atmosphere many Hindus of higher orders known as Smartas, evolved a kind of worship described as Pañchayatana pūjā in which the principal deities of the five approved Brahmanical Hindu

cults were the objects of veneration. The principal object of worship in it was usually in the form of an aniconic emblem which symbolised all the five cult deities. Sometimes five symbols of five major gods were placed on a round open metal dish called Pañchāyatana, the symbol of the deity preferred by the worshipper being in the centre. The mode of placing in the centre the symbol of the preferred deity in the Pañchāyatana arrangement indicated the cult affiliation of the Smārta worshipper. The Pañchāyatana pūjā of the Smārtas is also illustrated in many extant early and late medieval temples of India, in which the central shrine housing the principal deity is surrounded by four smaller shrines on the four corners of the quardrangle containing the figures of the four other deities.

Such a religious syncretistic tendency is very interestingly illustrated by a large number of early medieval sculptures also. A Pañchāyatana Śivalinga, originally found in Bihar and now in the collection of the Indian Museum, shows the four cult deities, Gaņapati, Vishņu, Pārvatī and Sūrya on the four sides the central Saiva emblem, all of which taken together symbolise the five Brahmanical Hindu cults. The Hari-Hara murti (or Haryardha aspect of Siva to a Saiva) emphasises the reconciliation between the two major cults of Vaishnavism and Saivism. The composite icons combining in them the features of Sūrya and Siva and Martanda and Bhairava are comparatively fewer.1 The Mārkandeya P. invokes Sūrya in this manner "Brahmā's, Śiva's and Vishnu's bodies are the same as the body of the resplendent Sun whose real nature is three-fold indeed, may he be gracious".2 The Ardhanārīśvara mūrtis of Śiva also symbolise the syncretistic ideology, for they apparently emphasise the union of the principal cult deities of Saivism and Sāktism. Siva-Lokeśvara, Sūrya-Lokeśvara and Hari-Hara-Sūrya-Buddha icons show syncretism between Brāhmanical Hinduism and Buddhism. Many other such sculptures are known.3 These may also be called another mode of symbolising the Panchayatana worship of the Smartas.4

¹Cf. Maitra, J., 'Mārtanda-Bhairava', Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 94 ff. Biswas, 'Sūrya and Siva', IHQ, XXIV.

²DHI, p. 551. ³Ibid., p. 546.

^{&#}x27;Many Brāhmanical Hindu and Buddhist images emphasise the sectarian ill-feeling also. One among the numerous forms of Avalokitesvara or Lokesvara

The spirit of syncretism expressed itself in many other ways. For example, for some time Surya formed with Brahma, Vishnu and Siva, a kind of quadrumvirate, as in many ceremonial gifts these four go together. The Matsya P. lays down that Brahmā Vishnu, Siva and Sūrya are identical or non-different (abheda). The Kūrma P. states that it originally consisted of four Samhitas - Brāhmī, Bhāgavatī, Saurī and Vaishnavī. The Skanda P. is divided into six Samhitās namely of Sanatkumāra and Sūta, Vaishņavī, Brāhmī, Śānkarī and Saurī. These facts suggest that these gods were associated together in some places and times. As Brahmā was gradually ousted from the field, a trinity of the other three was left and attempt was indeed made to establish a triad of Sūrya, Siva and Vishnu, with prominence given to the first. However the grouping of gods was always liable to alteration. The Matsya P. lays down that vows are to be made to Siva, Sūrya and Vishņu. Sūrya is found combined with the other three major gods-with Vishou in Sūrya-Nārāyaņa figures (Vishņu being himself an Āditya), with Siva in Martanda-Bhairava figures, and with Brahma in the images of a slightly later date. The Nāradīya P. ascribes to the second part of the Vāmana P. four Samhitas namely Māheśvarī, Bhāgavatī, Saurī and Gaņeśvarī, thus belittling the importance of Brahmā and extolling that of Ganesa. The Garuda P. accords the highest position to Vishau but prescribes modes of worship of Siva, Durgā, Gaņeśa and Sūrya also in the full Smārta manner. The Bhavishya P. mentions different groupings in different parts and, though concedings the importance of Surya in some parts, reserves pre-eminence for the old triad-Brahmā, Vishņu and Śiva.

Brahmā

In the presentday Hinduism theoretically Brahmā, Vishņu and

the Vajrayāna pantheon is known as Hari-Hari-Hari-vāhanodbhava Lokeśvara. It depicts Padmapāņi-Avalokiteśvara, the spiritual son of the Dhyānī-Buddha Amitābha, riding on the shoulders of Vishņu (Hari) who has Garuda (Hari) as his mount who is turn is mounted on the back of a lion (Hari). Advantage was thus taken of some of the various synonyms of the word hari by the sectarian iconographer in order to formulate such a type of icon in which the principal object of worship of the followers of one of the major Hindu cults was shown as a mere mount of a Buddhist divinity (DHI, p. 540).

Siva form the official Trinity of major gods in which Brahmā (masculine Brahman) is acknowledged as the creator of men and even of gods. But in practice he does not occupy much prominence in the devotion of the people. His position in the Hindu pantheon is inferior to that of any important cult deity and the very act of creating this universe and peopling it, his main duty, is now primarily attributed by the followers of the various cults to the respective deities of their choice.1 Though called Svayambhū (self-created), he is conceived to have sprung out of the mundane egg or of the lotus grown in the navel of Vishnu, and is said to have been saved by the latter from destruction at the hands of the demons Madhu and Kaitabha. A vague incest-myth of the Rgveda was foisted on him, and Siva was the deity who was given the task of punishing him for this moral lapse. Such myths indicate a general transfer of allegiance of the people from Brahmā to the two other gods of the Trinity. Nevertheless Brahmā had a small following, and a belated attempt was made by the auther of the *Padma* to revive his glory as a supreme god. Both the Brhatsamhitā and the Vishnudharmottara prescribe the mode of making his images.

However, as pointed out by Banerjea, such was not his position when the concrete concept about him and gods allied to him began to take shape in the Later Vedic age. Many Later Vedic texts refer to the creator gods such as Viśvakarman, Brahmaņaspati, Hiraņyagarbha, Prajāpati, Brahmá and Brahma.

The earliest sections of the RV know Brahmanaspati as the lord of prayer. He, like a blacksmith, is said to have shaped all created things (X.72.2). According to S. Bhattacharji his rise was concomitant with Varuna's decline. The Aitareya Brāhmana makes Brahmanaspati the god of the hymn I invoke the lord of the Ganas'. This description of Brahmanaspati as Ganapati naturally reminds us, and became the basis of his identification, though incorrectly, with the epic-Paurānika Ganeśa. Brhaspati is another major Vedic precursor of the epic-Paurānika Brahmā. He is the chief offerer of prayers and sacrifices and is, therefore, the abstraction of the priestly order. The clue to Brhaspati's

¹DHI, p. 511.

Bhattacharji, S., The Indian Theogony, p. 317.

identification with Brahmā is supplied by the SB, which says 'Brhaspati is the Brahman' (X.2.3.3) and 'the Brahman is the sacrifice' (V.3.2.4). Brahman is identified with Agni and Brhaspati ($\hat{S}B$ IX.2.3.3); by him is creation accomplished. But in the epics and Puranas the picture changes considerably, for now we have two distinct personalities: Bihaspati, the priest and counsellor of the gods, and Brahmā, the grandfather.

Tvashtr and Viśvakarman definitely belong to the creatorgroup of gods. Viśvakarman is identified with Prajāpati. gradually became the lord of all creation, animate and inanimate.

The most important epiphany of Brahmā is found in his Prajāpati aspect. In the RV the epithet is applied to Savitr, Soma, Agni and Indra. In the last verse of the RV (X.121) Prajāpati is described as the lord of all the created beings. According to the SB(X.6.5.9) Prajāpati originated from Brahmā who is self-existent. Prajapati is also the supporter of this universe, a function assigned to Vishnu in the epics and the Puranas. The Rāmā, gives a list of ancient Prajapatis. From them descended the gods, men and all creatures. In the Mbh., however, Prajāpatis are minor assistants of Brahma and carry out the latter's command and create different species.²

Prajapati became Viśvakarman after he created the universe. Viśvakarman produced the sky and earth (dyāvā bhūmim janavan) and shaped them with his hands (bāhubhyām). He was the first He was not merely the material cause but also the efficient cause of the world. He was the father of Viśvarūpa, his threeheaded son. He fashions forms (rupa) of creatures and this sense is expressed in his name Viśvakarman (the all fashioner) too.

Hiranyagarbha, another Vedic creator god, is assumed to have been the first to be born and is said to have established the earth and the sky in the proper position (RV, X.121.1). We are told that in the beginning there was only Hiranyagarbha, the lord of all beings. He upheld the earth and heaven. However the Brahmanas do not mention Hiranyagarbha as a separate epiphany except as a phase in the graded creative process.3

¹*Ibid.*, p. 319.

² *Ibid.*, p. 328.

^{*}Ibid., p. 331.

In the AV we get another manifestation of Brahmā, namely Skambha. He is called Purusha, Brahman, Parameshthin, Prajāpati, Hiraṇyagarbha and Skambha. Svayambhū as an epiphany of Brahmā was rather late in making his appearance. In the ŚB we hear of Brahmā Svayambhū who was performing penances. As Brahmā is usually described as rising out of a lotus from Vishņu's navel, strictly speaking he is not Svayambhū.

The more concrete concept of Brahmā took some time to develop and one of the earliest allusions to him are found in the Mundaka Upa. where he is described as first of the gods (Brahmā devānām prathamaḥ), creator of the universe (Viśvasyakartā) and the preserver of the world (bhuvanasya goptā). According to the Manusmṛti the self-existent (svayambhū) Lord was born in the golden egg (haimamaṇḍam) as Brahmā, the progenitor of all the worlds (sarvalokapitāmahaḥ). In this context the epithet Nārāyaṇa is also applied to him. According to Banerjea this statement of the Smṛti is based on the much older texts like the ŚB and others which describe how Prajāpati assumed the forms of fish, tortoise and boar for the attainment of some particular ends.¹

The concept of Brahmā further developed in the epics. There he is called Prajāpati, Dhātā, Vidhātā, Pitāmaha, Viśveśa, Srashtā, etc. According to Banerjea in the period when early portions of the epics were composed, he enjoyed some importance. But in the later sections of the epics his position gradually declined. In the Rāmā. Brahmā commands Vālmīki to compose the epic and personally appears to receive oblations at Dasaratha's horse-sacrifice. The gods approach him for the creation of Rāma; he agrees. Then Svayambhū Brahmā convenes an assembly of gods, where he proposes that they should help Vishnu when he is incarnated. In this work Brahmaloka is said to be above the region of the gods. The Mbh. says that Brahmā, the creator, was born of an egg. In this epic he is distinguished from Prajapati. Brahmā existed before and is superior to Prajāpati. In the HV too, Brahmā is born of a golden egg. The universe is created out of the broken bits of the shell. He created the prime progenitors, and gods, the Vedas, and men and women out of his two parts.

One of the causes of the decline of Brahmā lay in the fundamental weakness of his character: he could be pleased by

¹DHI, p. 511.

ascetic practices not only by the gods but also by the demons and when propitiated granted the latter desired powers with disastrous results. The epics and the Puranas narrate numerous tales about Vishnu and Siva setting matters right on such occasions. It gradually resulted in the decline of Brahma in comparison to them. Brahma now becomes subservient to them. He is born from the lotus issuing forth from Vishņu's navel, worships horse-headed form of Vishņu and receives laws from him. In some epic passages Siva creates Brahmā, the creator, and Brahmā praises the greatness of the former. The decline of his position was persistent and the Puranas take advantage of the vague deprecatory myths associated with Prajapati to enhance the process of his decline. The stories of Brahma's incestuous love for his own daughter and of his passion for telling lies may be recalled in this connection. In the Mbh. we are told that Brahma and Vishou were competing with each other in plumbing the depth and scaling the height of the Sthāņumūrti of Šiva. Brahmā falsely claimed to have reached the top of the column; Siva cursed him by saying that he would never have a cult of his own. This is clearly a later mythological gloss attempting to explain the actual absence or comparative insignificance of the Brahmā cult.

In the Puranas Brahma is a rather helpless god having very little practical initiative of his own. It is true that in the Paurānika age his right to be worshipped as a subsidiary deity was admitted, and his image was placed in a niche in the temples of Vishnu and Siva. He also figured in the images of the Trinity. But he was never accorded the central position, which was reserved for one of the other two gods. Some sacred places like Prayaga and Pushkara were specially associated with him. Though the special sect bearing his name disappeared in course of time, his worship did not die out altogether. His images are found from Sindh to Bengal, even though they are not very large in number. These depict him threefaced (most of them being relief sculptures, the fourth face is not shown; it is present only in those which are fully in the round), pot-bellied, four-armed and either standing or seated on his mount, a swan. One of his earliest brass or bronze images, fully in the round, was found at Mirpur Khas in Sindh.

When the Smārtas formulated their divine pentad (Pañchāya-tana) Brahmā finally lost his position as a sectarian deity. Today

in the whole of India there are only about half-a-dozen independent temples dedicated to him—at Dudahi, Khajuraho, Unkhal, Vasantgarh, Pushkar etc.¹ He has been ousted from the inner sanctuary and placed outside as a mere parivāra-devatā in the temples of Vishņu, Śiva and even of Kārttikeya.

Sarasvatī

Sarasvatī is known from early period mainly as the goddess of speech and wisdom. In the Manusmrti, offerings to her are prescribed for the expiation of falsehood. Although Macdonell thinks that in the RV she is nothing more than a river-goddess, there are also passages in that work which clearly connect her with wisdom and instruction.² According to Banerjea the fact that Vedic learning developed on the banks of Sarasvatī seems to have played some part in making her the goddess of learning.3 In the 10th mandala of the RV Vak is described as the embodiment of the Sakti principle. In the Vājasanevī Samhitā, however, Sarasvatī's connection with speech $(V\bar{a}k)$ becomes quite clear when she communicates vigour to Indra by her speech. In the Brāhmanas, and chiefly in the SB, she is repeatedly described as the personification of speech. In the \bar{A} svalāyana GS she is invoked to give intelligence to the new-born child. In the Pāraskara GS also, she is requested to bestow insight and intelligence upon her worshippers. In the later mythology, she becomes the only accepted goddess of learning. the epics she is called the tongue of Vishnu and in the Mbh. she gets the highly flattering title, 'the Mother of the Vedas'.4

As a presiding deity of learning, it was natural that Sarasvatī became the goddess of Arts and Music. The vīṇā became her special instrument. In the Kāmasūtra of Vātsyāyana the Nāgarakas flock every fortnight to the temple of the goddess Sarasvatī to witness dramatic performances etc. According to the Chūlavamsa, King Parākramabāhu built a palace called Sarassatīmaṇḍapa.

¹DHI, p. 514. Cf. Tripathi, L.K., 'The Date of the Brahmā Temple at Khajuraho', JAIH, V, p. 154 ff.

²Chaterjee, A.K., 'Some Aspects of Sarasvati', in Foreigners in Ancient India and Lakşmī [and Sarasvatī in Art and Literature, ed. by D.C. Sircar, Calcutta, 1970, p. 148 ff.; Yasodadevi, V., 'Sarasvatī Through the Ages', JIH, XLI, pt. 3, Dec. 63, pp. 681-97.

³DHI, p. 377.

^{*}Ibid.

Bhojadeva's great work on rhetoric was named Sarasvatikanthābharana (i.e. the necklace of Sarasvatī).

But the personality of Sarasvatī has other aspects also. In the SB she often appears as a healer-goddess. Her conception as a healer and physician may be traced to a Vedic passage where she, alongwith the Aśvins, is said to have refreshed Indra. According to the Kathāsaritsāgara of Somadeva the 'potent drugs' of Sarasvati were used by the ladies of Pataliputra to cure some dangerously sick people.

Sarasvatī is represented in the SB as a deity of prosperity also. In this connection one may recall that as a river-goddess in the RV Sarasvatī has been described as yielding riches of every kind and is invoked to give health, plenty and nourishment. In this text the epithet Subhagā is applied to her more than once.

In a passage of the Mbh. (XII. 122.25) Sarasvatī is associated with the science of judicature (dandanīti). In this epic she is also represented as the wife of Vishnu or Brahma and sometimes as the daughter of the latter. 1 Swan (hamsa) the vāhana of Brahmā became her vāhana also. In some Bengal sculptures she is found seated on a lamb.

Like Lakshmī, Sarasvatī had a prominent place in Buddhism and Jainism also. In Jainism she heads the Srutadevatās and the Vidyādevīs. A second century Jaina image of Sarasvatī was found at Kankālī ţīlā, Mathurā. An early Buddhist prototype of this goddess is found at Bharhut in which she is depicted as playing on a harp.2 Her separate figures from the late Gupta period onwards are comparatively commoner. Two-armed images of the goddess

¹The Purāņas describe the story of Brahmā's incest with his daughter Sarasvatī (also called Sāvitrī, Gāyatrī, Satarūpā, Ātmajā etc.) in detail. According to the Matsya P. Brahmā produced ten sons from his mind and one daughter Sarasvatī from his body and became enamoured of her. His keen desire of never ceasing to look at her caused a face to spring in each direction hence his five faces one of which was subsequently lost in a contest with the five-faced Rudra. Sarasyati's association with Vishnu is of more recent origin and is found in the Brahmavaivartta P. (cf. Bhattasali, N.K., Iconography of Buddhist and Brāhmanical Sculptures in the Dacca Museum, Dacca, 1929, p. 189 ff.).

²DHI, p. 377.

are shown as playing on a vina, but in the four-armed ones the back hands carry a rosary and a manuscript.1

Vyāntara Devatās: Yakshas

It has been shown in Chapters 3 and 4 of this work how the element of Bhakti introduced striking changes in the religious outlook of a large section of the people—in their mode of worship and their concept of gods and goddesses. The appearance of newer sectarian deities as a result of the deification of some of the historical, semi-historical and mythical personages was one of the most important of these developments. With the rise to importance of these newer cult deities, the primitive folk gods and goddess were relegated to an inferior or secondary position. They are described in early Jaina texts as Vyantara Devatas. In the new religious life of the people some of them became accessories and attendants of the higher sectarian deities or of their principal aspects while others, who could not find a place in the new set up, appear as their opponents.2

The Jaina religious texts enumerate the Vyantara Devatas usually in this manner: Piśāchas, Bhūtas, Yakshas, Rākshasas, Kinnaras, Kimpurushas, Mahorāgas (Nāgas) and Gandharvas.3 The Buddhist literature also mentions similar orders of divinities as Devas, Yakshas, Nagas, Rākshasas, Gandharvas, Asuras, Garudas, Kinnaras and Mahoragas. The Brahmanical Hindu texts contain not only the names of most of these, but add many more names of such mythical beings, as Kumbhāṇḍas, Kabandhas, Daityas, Dānavas. Apsarās, Siddhas, Sādhyas, Vidyādharas, Pramathas, Ganas, etc.4 As pointed out by J.N. Banerjea: "In fact, most, if not all, of these different groups are common to the various early texts of India. The word 'Deva' (or 'Devata') in the Buddhist list is of special significance in this context, for it denotes the original character of many of these beings of which the Yakşas and the Nagas form the most important and interesting groups.

¹For a study of Sarasvatī, vide Sinha, B.C., Hinduism and Symbol Worship, Ch. 10.

²DHI, p. 335; cf. Coomaraswamy, Yakşas, p. 24 ff.

²DHI, p. 336.

⁴ Ibid.

These two alongwith the groups of the Gandharvas and the Apsarasas occupy also a very prominent place in the Brāhmaṇical Hindu mythology. Reference may be made in this connection to the first lines of the mantra recited by many Hindus in the tarpaṇa and śrāddha ceremonies when they offer water and other objects to the manes (Pitṛgaṇas), mythical heroes like Rāma and Bhīṣma, the gods, the Yakṣas and others. These three lines contain the names of the orders of these Vyāntara Devatās: Devas, Yakṣas, Nāgas, Gandharvas, Apsarasas, Asuras, Sarpas, Suparṇas (Garuḍas), Trees (sacred one), Jihmagas (a class of sacred reptiles), Khagas (sacred birds), Vidyādharas, Jalacharas (sacred acquatic animals), Ākasagāmīs (Sādhyas and Siddhas), etc."

One of the earliest allusions to the Yakshas is to be found in the AV where they are named as Itarajanāḥ, 'other folk' or 'Punyajanāh', 'sacred folks'. In later lexicons, both the words are regarded as the synonyms of the word Yaksha. was also their meaning in the AV passage as is proved by the mention of Kubera or Vaiśravana as the king of the Yakshas. In the developed mythology of later times, he was also the guardian of the northern quarter (Uttaradikpati). While commenting on Vārttika 2 on Pānini's Sūtra VI. 3.26 Patanjali appears to distinguish between two different varieties of divinties, namely Vaidika or Vedic deities, and Laukika or folk deities. According to Baneriea the names of the gods included by Patanjali in the two compounds Śiva-Vaiśravanau and Skanda-Viśākhau, undoubtedly fall under the Laukika group. Again, while commenting on Pāṇini's Sūtra V. 2. 129 Patañjali states that Vaiśravana had Piśāchas as his attendants. There can hardly be any doubt that here Yaksha attendants of Kubera are described. Patañjali also mentions that Kubera was worshipped iconically, for, while commenting on Pāṇini's Sūtra II. 2.34 he refers to the temples of Dhanapati (Kubera-Vaiśravana), Rāma (evidently Balarāma) and Keśava (Kṛshṇa) where various kinds of musical instruments were played in the assemblage of devotees.2

The Yaksha worship is even now an important aspect of the folk religion (lokadharma) of the Hindus. The Yakshas are now

¹Ibid.

^{*}DHI, p. 337 f.

Worshipped as bīras or tutelary deities of villages and cities. Prof. V.S. Agrawala has done a lot of work on the literary sources of this aspect of Hindu religion.¹ But as Sylvain Lévi has pointed out "The archaeology of India has as yet very little advanced so as to allow us to find out whether in each village the attribution of its tutelary Yakṣa is in conformity with the reality or is simply fanciful.....To find Viṣṇu designated as the tutelary Yakṣa of Dvārikā, Kārttikeya as the tutelary Yakṣa of Rohitaka, Vibhīṣaṇa as the tutelary Yakṣa of Tāmraparṇi...one comes to the conclusion that the Yakṣa is essentially a personage closely associated with local memories. Some have been brilliantly successful; and with the help of circumstances or by prestige of poetry, they have imposed themselves on the whole of India. Others, less fortunate, have enjoyed only a parochial reputation".²

Vyāntara Devatās: Nāgas, Gandharvas, etc.

T.A. Gopinatha Rao has collected several texts descriptive of such iconographic types as Nāgas, Vasus, Sādhyas, Asuras, Apsarās, Vetālas etc. from various sources. The Nāgas and the Nāgins had far more individualistic iconographic traits from early times, and the wide prevalence of the 'snake-cult' in India also explains their retention. We had occasion to comment on the popularity of the Nāga cult elsewhere in this work.

The Gandharvas and Kinnaras are two other classes of mythical beings of a semi-divine character. They play a secondary part in the religious literature and art of ancient India. One of the earliest references to the former is to be found in the same section of the AV (VIII. 10) which alludes to the Yakshas and the Nāgas.

It is not possible here to discuss other categories of the Vyāntara devatās, such as the Vidyādharas, Sādhyas, Siddhas, Asuras, etc., for excepting one or two groups among them, the rest have got very little individuality. The most individualistic groups of them is that of the Vidyādharas. The Kabandhas and Kumbhāndas are interesting only iconographically.

¹Agarwala, V.S., Prāchīna Bhāratīya Lokadharma, Varanasi; see also his Indian Art, p. 114; Sinha, B.C., Hinduism and Symbol Worship, Ch. 6.

^{*}Quoted in PIHC, 1981, p. 170, n. 21a.

Miscellaneous Deities: Lokapālas or Dikpālas

The Indian concept of the Dikpālas or Lokapālas, the guardians of the quarters, is very old. In the Digha- and Anguttara Nikayas Dhatarattha is mentioned as the lord of the east, Virūdhaka of the south, Vessavana (Kubera) of the north and Virupaksha of the west.1 They are called the four Maharajas. The earliest epigraphical reference to the Brahmanical Dikpalas or Lokapalas is found in the Nanaghat inscription of Naganika, the Satavahana queen (1st cent. B.C.).2 They are Yama, Varuna, Kubera and Indra. In the well-developed Pauranika mythology Indra is the lord of the east, Yama of the south, Varuna of the west and Kubera of the north; Agni, Nirrti, Vayu and Isana are the respective Lords of the south-east, south-west, north-west and north-east. We do not, however, find this stereotyping in earlier texts, where there is a great variety in the enumeration of the protectors of the various quarters or the worlds. Buddhist and Jaina texts also differ from each other in their characterisation of this group of divinities. Sūrya, Chandra, Vāyu, Agni, Yama, Varuna, Indra and Kubera, the eight great Devas of the early epic literature, are grouped in some later works as the guardians of the four chief and four minor quarters, or simply as 'Lokapālas'. Thus. Manu tells us that a king embodies in his self all the eight Lokapālas: Soma (Chandra), Agni, Arka (Sūrya), Anila (Vāyu), Indra, Vittapati (Kubera), Apapati (Varuna) and Yama. first list, which is later in point of time, differs from the second one in substituting Nirrti and Isana for Surya and Chandra in the latter.3

Some Folk Deities

Here a brief mention may be made of some folk deities such as Jarā, Jyeshthā, Śītalā etc. The epic story of Jarāsandha, the Magadhan king, refers to the ogress Jarā who was responsible for bringing back the discarded halves of the newborn babe (the word Jarā-sandha literally means 'united by Jarā'). She describes

^{&#}x27;Sircar, D.C., 'Guardians of Quarters', in Religious Life in Ancient India, Calcutta, 1972, p. 72ff.

^{*}Sel. Ins., I, 1965, p. 193.

^{*}DHI, p. 520.

herself to Brhadratha, the father of Jarāsandha, as the Rākshasī Jarā with power to assume different forms (kāmarūpiņī) who was worshipped not only in the royal household itself, but by the people in general.

The worship of Jyeshthā was once very popular in Southern India. In the Baudhāyana DS she is described as having lions attached to her chariot and tigers following her. One of the Alvārs complains in his songs about the foolishness of the common people who worship such goddesses of lowly origin for happiness and prosperity when they could easily obtain supreme bliss by praying to Lord Vishņu.

According to Gopinatha Rao the worship of Jyeshthā is practically obsolete now in Southern India. But the lost ground was gained by her under another name, Šītalā, in eastern and western parts of India, Bengal, Orissa, Gujarat, etc. Šītalā, worshipped in these parts as the goddess of smallpox, has many affinities with the Buddhist Hārīti.

Nandin

Vṛshabha was at first the attributive epithet of several of the Vedic divinities including Rudra, but it came to denote Rudra-Siva specifically in the post-Vedic age. The idea about the bull being the vāhana or mount of the god appears to have originated before the first century B.C. or first century A.D. The coins of Ujjayinī and those of Wema Kadphises prove it. Nandin, Nandīśvara or Adhikāranandin are some of the various names by which Siva's vāhana is described in the epic and Paurāṇika works. In these texts he is conceived more as one of Siva's gaṇas than his vāhana. Unlike Garuḍa he was usually fully anthropomorphised though hybridity in his representation was not unknown.

The anthropomorphising of Nandin began in the early centuries of the Christian era. It was an accomplished fact by the Gupta period as is proved by his description by Kālidāsa. He is described there as keeping guard over the entrance-door to Siva's abode at Kailāśa with a golden staff resting against his left fore-arm, and silencing the gaṇas with a finger of his right hand placed on his mouth.¹

¹Kumārasambhava, III. 41.

Garuda

Garuda or Garutmān is known as the vāhana of Vishņu. Sātvata list of the 39 incarnations of the god he appears as Vihangama and Amrtaharana, the god's 9th and 18th avatāras. He was originally the Sun conceived as a bird. A Rgvedic hymn (I.164.46) describes the celestial Garutman as endowed with beautiful wings (divyah sa suparno Garutmān). Garuda's another name is Tarkshya in the epic and Pauranika literature. The Mbh. (Adiparvan, Chs. 43-50) narrates the story of the stealing of amṛta or nectar by Garuda who undertook this task for the Nagas in order that they would release Vinata from Kadru's bondage. Vinatā was set free as stipulated but the Nāgas were deprived of the nectar which was stolen by Indra. The tongues of the Nagas were cleft asunder, and remained so ever afterwards, because they licked up the sharp-edged kuśa grass on which the pot of amṛta was placed by Garuda.1

\bar{A} yudhapurushas

In Hinduism, specially in Vaishnavism, the attributes or weapons meant to be placed in the hands of the deities were personified and represented anthropomorphically. Such representations were known as Ayudhapurushas. Chakra (wheel) and gadā (club) of Vishnu are found represented in human form as early as the Gupta age. The Chakravikrama type coins of Chandragupta II represent Lord Chakrapurusha—that is, chakra in human form. Sankha and padma are also found anthropomorphised in the early medieval Vishnuite reliefs. Various other emblem such vajra, śakti danda, khadga, pāśa, ankuśa triśūla etc. are shown personified in late iconographic texts.² Sometimes the triśūla and other attributes of Lord Siva are also found represented in human form.3

¹DHI, p. 530. For a study of Garuda also see Singh, O.P., Religion and Iconography in Early Indian Coins, Varanasi, 1978, pp. 96-8.

DHI, p. 537 f.

For the representation of Rudradandapurusha cf. the pillar on which the Mathura inscription of Chandragupta II of the G.E. 61 is inscribed (Goyal, S.R., Guptakālīna Abhilekha, p. 103). Also see Gopinatha Rao, Elements of Hindu Iconography, I, Pt. 2, p. 77f.; J.U.P.H.S., VIII, Pt. 2, pp. 79-82.

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Hanumāna

Hanumana, the monkey-god of medieval and modern India, was known in the earlier period only as the devotee par-excellence of Rāma, the incarnation of Vishnu.¹ He had as yet to acquire a following of his known though some orthodox Hindus trace his divine existence even in the Vedic texts.²

¹Gangesvarananda, 'Rgveda men Śrī Rāmadūta Hanumāna', Kalyāna, Hanumānānka, p. 37 ff.; Gupta, B.L., 'Upanishadon men Hanumāna', ibid., p. 87 f. In the latter paper the author discusses the reference to Hanumāna in later (post-Vedic) Upanishads. The reference to Vṛṣhākapi in RV X.86 has nothing to do with a monkey-god or Hanumāna. For a correct interpretation of this hymn see K.C. Chattopadhyaya, Studies in Vedic and Indo-Iranian Religion and Literature, I, ed. by V.N. Mishra, Varanasi, 1976, pp. 1-73.

²Hanumāna is also mentioned as the devotee of Siva in the Skanda P. Cf. Upadhyaya, Baldeo, 'Purāņon men Śrī Māruti', Kalyāna, Hanumānānka, p. 76 ff.

APPENDIX

Evidence of the Maitrāyanīya Samhitā, Taittirīya Āranyaka and Mahānārāyana Upanishad on the Antiquity of Paurānika Gods

In some late Vedic texts mention is made of some of Paurāṇika deities and their gāyatrī-mantras.¹ The question therefore arises whether or not these texts prove the prevalence of the worship of these gods in the Vedic age. J.N. Banerjea thinks it unlikely and he seems to be right. In this Appendix we propose to discuss his ideas on this point.

The Maitrayaniya Samhitā introduces the Satarudriya text with an invocation of Sarva (one of the names of Rudra) and addresses him as Siva. Then are given the gayatri-mantras of Purusa-Mahādeva (Rudra), Girisutā (Gaurī), Kumara-Kārttikeya (Skanda), Karāta (?)-Hastimukha (Danti, Ganeśa), Chaturmukha-(Vishņu), Bhāskara-Keśava-Nārāyaņa **P**admāsana (Brahmā), (Sūrya), Somarāja-Mahārāja (Chandra), Jvalana-Prabhākara (Agni), Tyajapa (?Japa)- Mahājapa (Dhyāna) and Vaiśvānara Paramātmā-Vainateya (Sṛshti). Here we not only find the names of the Brahmanical Trinity of the epics and the Puranas and those of Siva's consort and their two sons Karttikeya and Ganeśa, also the names of Sūrya, Chandra and even of Japa, Mahājapa and the Paramatman. As pointed out by Banerjea, the developed nature of the concept of some of them is proved by the mention of their iconographic traits, for example of Ganapati (described here as Hastimukha and Danti) and Brahmā (described here as Chaturmukha and Padmāsana). From this Banerjea has rightly concluded that this section of the Sainhitā is very late. It is also proved by the fact that the Taittiriya Samhitā and the Vājasaneyī Samhitā which also contain the Satarudrīya passage do not give this introductory portion.2

The first Anuvāka of the Tenth Prapāthaka of the Taittirīya Āranyaka, after quoting some extracts from Vedic and Upanishadic texts, gives us the gāyatrī-mantras of Purusha-Sahasrāksha-Mahādeva-Rudra, Purusha-Mahādeva-Rudra, Purusha-Vakratunda-Danti (Gaņeśa), Purusha-Chakratunda-Nandi (perhaps the bull form of Śiva), Purusha-Mahāsena-Shanmukha (Kumāra-Kārtti-keva), Purusha-Suvarnapaksha-Garuda, Vedātman-Hiranyagarbha-

¹Vide *DHI*, p. 575 f. for references and details. ⁹*Ibid*.

Brahmā, Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Vishṇu, Vajranakha-Tīkshṇadam-shṭra-Narasimha, Bhāskara-Mahādyutikara-Āditya, Vaiśvānara-Lālola-Agni and Kātyāyana (ī)-Kanyākumārī-Durgī (X.1, 5-7). In the 16th section of the same Anuvāka occurs this three-line verse which contains the names of all these 12 deities whose gāyatrīs have been recited—

Rudro Rudraścha Dantiścha Nandih Shanmukha eva cha / Garudo Brahma-Vishnuścha Narasimhasthaiva cha / Ādityo' gniścha Durgischa kramena dvādaśāmbhasi //1

These two lists, one from the Maitrāyaṇīya Samhitā and the other from the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, contain much that is common to both though there are differences also. The Āraṇyaka text leaves out Dhyāna, Paramātmā and Chandra, and brings in Nandī, Garuda and Narasimha, changes some epithets and counts Mahādeva-Rudra twice. Thus Hastimukha is replaced by Vakratuṇḍa, Kumāra-Kārttikeya-Skanda by Purusha-Mahāsena-Shaṇmukha, Chaturmukha-Pandmāsana-Brahmā by Vedātman-Hiraṇyagarbha-Brahma (ā?), Keśava (Nārāyaṇa-Vishṇu) by Nārāyaṇa-Vāsudeva-Vishṇu, Bhāskara-Prabhākara by Bhāskara-Mahādyutikara-Āditya, etc. The Āraṇyaka text also adds more individualistic traits in the description of the deities.²

The Mahānārāyaṇa Upanishad not only contains almost everything of this nature found in the Taittirīya Āranyaka, but has also some additional mantras like those of Mahādurgā, Bhagavatī, Gaurī, Sūrya, Bhānu etc., some of whom are nothing but different aspects of the same deity (Mahādurgā, Bhagavatī and Gaurī are epithets of Durgā, and Sūrya, Bhānu etc. of Āditya). The individualistic traits of many of them are also much developed in this text. Therefore Banerjea is right in concluding that at least the above-mentioned portions of these texts were composed when the epic-Paurānika tendencies had become quite firm.

¹Ibid., p. 577.

¹Ibid.

^{*}Ibid.

Chapter 17

Tantrika Hinduism

Meaning of Tantra

The Tantrika literature represents a very important and fascinating part of Indian spiritual lore. But Tantrika texts and practices are as diverse as they are imperfectly understood.1 Therefere Tantrikism has excited contradictory attitudes and evaluations. Some modern scholars condemn it as magical, superstitious, and obscene whereas others consider it as scientific and profoundly spiritual. In the Vedic texts the word tantra occurs in the sense of a loom. The Śrautasūtras use the word in the sense of a process of work containing many parts. In the Mīmāmsā tradition also tantra is an act-process—a method of doing or making something. In the Mahābhāshya of Patañjali the word tantra signifies a branch of knowledge, while the writers on the sciences of polity and medicine use the word Tantraniryukti to mean 'canons'. 'propositions', 'principles', 'expositions', etc.2 The Amarakosha refers to the various scientific treatises as tantrāni and Śankara uses the word tantra in the sense of a philosophical system.³ In the religious sense Tantra first came to mean 'the scripture by which knowledge is spread' (tanyate vistāryate jñānam anena iti tantram).4

In the Kāśikāvṛtti the word 'tantra' is derived from the root tan, to spread, though some later writers derive it from the root tatri or tantri meaning origination or knowledge. In the next stage

¹Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 153.

²Bhattacharya, N.N., *History of Tantric Religion*, New Delhi, 1982, p. 1 f.; cf. Sharma, D.B. Sen, *Studies in Tantra Yoga*, Karnal, 1985, Ch. I.

Bagchi, P.C., 'Evolution of the Tantras', CHI, IV, p. 211.

⁴Cf. RHAI, I, p. 336.

it was defined as a class of texts which promulgates profound matters concerning tattva (science of the cosmic principles) and mantra (the science of mystic sound) (Kāmikāgama).

Tantras in Relation to Vedas

Although later Tantrika writers wanted to base their doctrines on the Vedas, the orthodox followers of the Vedic tradition invariably stressed their anti-Vedic character. The common obsession of many modern educated people, both foreign and Indian, is also that the Tantras should be evaluated apart from a general sheme of values to which Hinduism subscribes.

Further, in the popular mind Śāktism and Tantra have become so much identified that the word Tantra is almost reserved for the religious literature of the Śāktas while the term Āgama is confined to that of the Śaivas and Samhitā, Kāṇḍa or Rātra to that of the Vaishṇavas. Winternitz says: "When we speak of Tantra, we think primarily of the sacred books of the Śāktas". It has also been argued that the conventional division of the Brāhmaṇical religious literature was into Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra, arranged in chronological order and assigned to the four ages of the world. Against this view it has been rightly pointed out by scholars like John Woodroffe, Gopinātha Kavirāja, G.C. Pande and a host of others that:

(a) The Tantras regard themselves as Veda, Śruti or Āgama, 'revelation', as opposed to Smṛṭi or Nigama, 'tradition'. They are usually defined as 'Śrutiśākhāviśeshah', a particular branch of the Vedas. According to Bagchi one of the oldest Tantras available in manuscript form, Niśvāsatattva Samhitā, holds that the Tantra is the culmination of the esoteric science of the Vedānta and the Sāmkhya.¹ The Pingalāmata, which is an equally old Tāntrika text, says 'The Tantra, first communicated by Śiva, came down through tradition. It is Āgama with the characteristics of Chandas (Vedas)'. The Prapañchasāra and other Tantras cite Vaidika mahāvākyas and mantras: and as mantras are a part of the Vedas, says the Meru Tantra, the Tantra is a part of the Vedas. The Niruttara Tantra calls Tantra the fifth Veda, and Kaulāchāra

¹Bagchi, op. cit., p. 212.

the fifth āśrama, which follows all others. The Matsyasūkta-mahātantra says that the disciple must be of pure soul and a knower of the Vedas. He who is devoid of Vaidika-kriyā is disqualified. The Gandharva Tantra says that the Tāntrika sādhaka must be a believer in the Vedas, ever attached to Brahman, living in Brahman and taking shelter with Brahman. The Kulārņava Tantra describes the Tantra as Vedātmaka (Vedic in spirit) and says that there is no knowledge higher than that of the Vedas and no doctrine equal to the Kaula.

According to the Rudrayāmala the supreme goddess is of the Atharvavedic group. The Kulārnava also emphasises the Vedic origin of Tantra. Bhaskarārya considers the Tantras to be the supplements of the Upanishads. Natanānandanātha, in his commentary on the Kāmakalāvilāsa, has attemped to trace the origin of the Tāntrika mantras to the Vedas. Lakshmīdhara has quoted extracts from the TS and explained them as having reference to Śrīvidyā. The use of the Vedic mantras in the Tāntrika practices suggests the same thing. We also come across Tāntrika adaptations of the Vedic Gāyatrī-mantras for invocation of different deities.²

- (b) The division of Brāhmaṇical literature into Veda, Smṛti, Purāṇa and Tantra does not mean, however, that these different types have nothing in common between them. While some Tantras are modelled after Purāṇas some portions of the Purāṇa literature read almost like a Tantra manual. It means that the Tāntrika forms existed during, if not before, the Purāṇas. Therefore the theory that the Tāntrika age followed the Paurāṇika age is not wholly correct.
- (c) The attitude in the Tantras is basically similar to that of the Vedas. The religion of the Vedic Samhitas was ritualistic. As we have shown in the first volume of the present work, in course of time it developed into a highly mystical ritual, a sort of magical operation, independent of the gods, efficacious by its own force, and capable of producing good as well as bad effects. Correct recitation of the mantras was its most important

¹All quoted by Bagchi, op. eit.

Bhattacharya, N.N., op. cit., p. 164 f.

aspect. The Tāntrika sādhanā also seeks attainment of ascendancy over the forces of nature by esoteric ritual of the Vedic type, as well as by esoteric Yaugika practices, its aim being the union of Šiva and Šakti. The beginning of this type of esoteric ritual is found as early as the Brāhmanas and the Upanishads. Kullūkabhatta in his commentary on Manu II.1 divided traditional knowledge into Vedic and Tāntrika, and this division was not baseless. But in course of time this double framework has ceased to be double and has been assimilated into one organic whole. That being so, it will not do to look upon the Tantra simply as a gift of China, Tibet or some other foreign source.

(d) The 'left-handed' practices (vāmāchāra), donot exhaust the whole content of Tāntrikism. The Kulārṇava Tantra, for instance describes as many as seven paths or āchāras, starting with Vedāchara and ending with Kaula. Some other Tantras add two more namely aghora and yoga. Actually the word 'tantra' is as wide as it is varied, and embraces not only the Śākta, but the Śaiva, Vaishṇava, Saura, Gāṇapatya and Buddhist forms (with their numerous sub-species) also.

Basic Tenets of Tantra

A fair idea of the general Tāntrika principles may be had from the Mahānirvāṇa Tantra, one of the most popular and well-known Tāntrika texts. According to it Brahman is nothing but Śakti, the eternal dynamic source of all beings. "It is perceived that all life proceeds from the womb of a woman; so we should think of the ultimate creative principles in terms of the 'mother' and not of the 'father'. Philosophical concepts like Prakriti and Māyā, and mythological figures like Pārvatī, Durgā, Lakshmī and Rādhā constitute the female principle of creation, and are merely different names of the Jaganmātā (Mother of the Word). All gods, including Brahmā, Vishņu, and Śiva, are contained in and issue out of the Divine Mother. This sect, therefore, looks upon every woman as an incarnation of the Universal Mother".3

¹Pratyagatmananda, Swami, 'Tantra as a Way of Realization', CHI, IV, p. 227.

²We have already discussed the theory of the foreign origin of Tantrikism in *RHAI*, I, p. 337 f.

Bhattacharya, H.D., AIK, p. 31.

The Tantras say that Siva without Sakti is a lifeless corpse (śava), because wisdom cannot move without power. But at the same time it is also emphasised that the relation between Siva, who is the possessor of Śakti, and Śakti Herself is one of identity; the one cannot be without the other. In other words the highest reality has been conceived as the union of the primeval Male and Female Principles. Siva is commonly said to be the male principle, and Sakti the female principle. The man who worships the male principle is a Saiva; and he who worships the female principle, is called a Sakta. In Buddhist Tantrikism Upaya and Prajña correspond to the principles of Siva and Sakti respectively.1 When Siva is worshipped, His consort is also worshipped; for the two are inseparable. For the same reason, when Sakti is worshipped Siva is also worshipped.²

Thus Saktivada forms the corner-stone of the philosophy of the Tantras. The activities of Sakti, the Primordial Female Energy, underlie the variegated forms and phenomena of the universe. It is through these forms that man can ascend and find his consummation with the Universal Principle.³

"The Saiva Agamas, the Vaishnava Samhitas and the Sakta Tantras agree on one point, namely, that a female principle representing the Sakti or energy must be associated with the ultimate reality or the source or locus of power considered as male. This power is not only the cause of manifestation, but is also responsible for defferentiation, and hence a diversified world in time and space, including finite individuals, comes into being because of the association of the male and the female, as in the generation of the world of living things."4 The Tantras generally accept both physical and mental aspects of the world as real: only they do not accord matter or praktti independent existence as in the Sāmkhya system, but suppose it to be under the control of the spirit and, in fact, look upon the body as the seat of the divine in every part thereof.

¹*RHAI*, I, p. 344 ff.

²CHI, IV, p. 250.

³Yadava, B.N.S., Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century, Allahabad, 1973, p. 361 f.

⁴AIK, p. 323.

Tantrika Literature

Tāntrika texts are known by such names as Tantra, Upatantra, Āgama, Samhitā, Yāmala, Dāmara, Tattva, Kalpa, Arņava(ka), Uddāla, Uddīśa, Upasamkhyā, Chudāmaņī, Vimarśiņī, Chintāmaņī, Purāṇa, Upasamjñā, Kakshapuṭī, Kalpadruma, Kāmadhenu, Svabhāva, Avataraṇaka, Sūkta, Amṛta(tarpaṇa), Darpaṇa, Sāgara etc. The terms Tantra, Āgama and Samhitā are very often used in the same sense. According to the *Pingalāmata* an Āgama is that by which the objects around are known. The name is also explained as that class of Tantra which was addressed by Siva to Pārvatī.

Some of the Tantras give their own number as sixty-four while others call themselves innumerable. The Śaktisangamatantra refers to the Tantrika sects and treatises of the Vaishnavas, Gāṇapatyas, Śaivas, Svāyambhuvas, Chandras, Pāśupatas, Chīnas, Jainas, Kālāmukhas and Vaidikas. The Sammohanatantra knows the existence of (i) 402 Saiva Tantras (32 Tantras, 325 Upatantras, 10 Samhitās, 5 Arņavas, 2 Yāmalas, 3 Dāmaras, 1 Uddāla, 2 Uddīśas, 8 Kalpas, 8 Upasamkhyās, 2 Chūdāmaņīs, 2 Chintāmaņīs and 2 Vimarśiņīs); (ii) 339 Vaishņava Tantras (75 Tantras, 205 Upatantras, 20 Kalpas, 8 Samhitas, 1 Arņavaka, 5 Kakshapuțis, 8 Chūdamanis, 2 Chintamanis, 2 Uddisas, 2 Damaras, 1 Yāmala, 5 Purāņas, 3 Tattvabodha-vimaršiņīs, and 2 Amrtatarpaņas); (iii) 180 Saura Tantras (30 Tantras, 96 Upatantras, 4 Samhitās, 2 Upasamhitās, 5 Purāņas, 10 Kalpas, 2 Kakshapuţīs, 3 Tattvas, 3 Vimarśiņīs, 3 Chūdāmaņīs, 2 Dāmaras, 2 Yāmalas, 5 Uddālas, 2 Avataraņas, 2 Uddīśas, 3 Amrtas, 3 Darpaņas, and 3 Kalpas); (iv) 122 Gāṇapatya Tantras (50 Tantras, 25 Upatantras, 2 Purāņas, 3 Sāgaras, 3 Darpaņas, 5 Amrtas, 9 Kalpakas, 3 Kakshapuţīs, 2 Vimarśiņīs, 2 Tattvas, 2 Uddīśas, 3 Chūdāmaņīs, 3 Chintamanis, 1 Damara, 1 Chandrayamala, and 8 Pancharatras), and (v) 39 Bauddha Tantras (not quite clear in the text) (5 Avatarņakas, 5 Sūktas, 2 Chintāmaņīs, 9 Purāņas, 3 Upasamjñās, 2 Kakshaputīs, 3 Kalpadrumas, 2 Kāmadhenus, 3 Svabhāvas, and 5 Tattvas).2 These numbers are obviously fictitious, but they

¹Bhattacharya, N.N., History of Tantric Religion (HTR), p. 38. ²Bagchi, in CHI, IV, p. 221 f.

indicate that the author of the Sammohanatantra had a vague idea of the various Tantrika sects and their texts.

The Tantrika texts are classified according to the mythological periods of time or according to the geographical divisions. In the Mahāsiddhasāratantra Bhāratavarsha and its adjoining regions are divided into three krantas or divisions, viz. Vishņukrāntā, Rathakrāntā and Aśvakrāntā. Each of these krāntās, it is said, has 64 Tantras. A classification of Tantrika texts on the basis of the three currents of Tantrika tradition-dakshina (characterized by sattva), vāma (characterized by rajas) and madhyama (characterized by tamas)—is also found, each of which is again subdivided into two classes, inner (hārda) and outer (bāhva).1

Tantrika texts in their present form mostly belong to the medieval and late medieval period. However, manuscripts of several Tantrika works written in Gupta characters are available. The Śaiva Āgamas of the South are mentioned in a Kailāśanātha temple inscription of Rajasimhavarman (6th cent. A.D.).2 The antiquity of the Buddhist Tantrika texts has already been noted in the first volume of this work.3

The origin and development of Hindu Tantrikism was intimately connected with the rise of Saivism and the Pancharatra, the Samkhya-Yoga providing them with a philosophical background. The Pancharatra literature shows that it was regarded as The Sāttvata Samhitā, studied by R.G. Bhandarkar, the system as rahasyāmnāya 'a secret method of The text also describes the mystic modes of worship by means of mantras and mystic arrangement of latters and formulas and the meditations on them. In the Māheśvaratantra it is seated that the Pancharatra Samhitas are 25 in number. But Schrader has compiled a list of 224 Pāncharātra texts variously classed as Samhitas, Tantras and Agamas.5

Saivism supplied a more propitious ground for the development of Tantrikism. The school possessed a considerable literature

¹Bhattacharya, N.N., op. cit., p. 37 f.

^{*}Ibid., p. 40.

^{*}RHAI, I, 341 f.

⁴Bagchi, op. cit., p. 214.

⁵Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 41.

called Āgamas supposedly transmitted by Rudra or Sadāśiva himself. According to one tradition Āgamas, also called Śiva Tantras, are eighteen in number. They are (1) Vijaya, (2) Niśvāsa, (3) Svāyambhuva, (4) Vātula, (5) Vīrabhadra, (6) Raurava, (7) Mākuṭa, (8) Vīreśa, (9) Chandrahāsa, (10) Jñāna, (11) Mukhabimba, (12) Prodgīta, (13) Lalitā, (14) Siddha, (15) Santāna, (16) Sarvodgīta, (17) Kiraṇa and (18) Parameśvara. The Niśvāsatantra mentions ten more Śiva Tantras: (1) Kāmika, (2) Yagada (?), (3) Divya, (4) Karaṇa (Kiraṇa?), (5) Ajita, (6) Dīpta, (7) Sūkshma, (8) Sahasra, (9) Asta(?) and (10) Amśubheda.¹

The Āgamas or Śiva Tantras have ritualistic character. They deal with homa, abhisheka, dīkshā, yajñaprakaraṇa, method of erecting a Śiva temple, mode of worshipping Śiva, yoga, mukti (salvation), etc. These texts believe that for sādhanā there is need of exoteric ritual of the Vedic type as well as of esoteric practices like yoga, that the aim of sādhanā is the attainment of mukti and that the highest caste, the Brāhmaṇa, is alone eligible for it.

According to P.C. Bagchi the next phase in the development of the Tantras is probably represented by Yāmalas. The principal Yāmalas are: Rudra, Kanda (Skanda), Brahmā, Vishņu, Yama, Vāyu, Kubera and Indra. Whereas the Siva Tantras or Āgamas represent the Rudra or Sadāśiva tradition, the Yāmalas represent the Bhairava tradition, for they are said to have been communicated by the eight Bhairavas (Svachchhanda, Krodha, Unmatta, Ugra, Kapālin, Jhankāra, Šekhara, and Vijaya) who were probably emancipated human teachers. Two other old texts, Pingalāmata and Jayadratha Yāmala, also belong to the Yāmala group.²

The Yāmalas indicate a great development in the Tāntrika sādhanā. They try to define the various Tāntrika traditions and introduce a great variety of cults of new gods and goddesses. The Brahmā Yāmala gives an interesting account of the transmission of the Tāntrika lore in which many Atharvan Brāhmaṇas as well as a Śūdra named Sīśamsa also figure.³

Tāntrika subjects have been incorporated in several Purāņas

¹CHI, IV, p. 215.

^{*}Ibid., p. 216.

^{*}Ibid., p. 217.

also. Apararka quotes a passage from the Devipurana where in the qualification of a Sthapaka (one who performs the installation of God) is considered in terms of his ability in Tantrika rituals. The Agni P. states that the worship of Vishnu and other gods should follow the Vaidikī, Tāntrikī or Miśra way, the first and third being for the three higher varnas and the second for the Sūdras. The Kālikā P. describes in detail mantras, mudrās, kavachas, nyāsas, etc. The *Bhāgavata P*, describes Tantrikī dīkshā etc.1 Many Tantrika elements are found in the Later or New Upanishads and medieval Nibandhas.²

In form an ordinary Tantra is somewhat similar to a Purāņa since, theoretically atleast, it discusses five subjects (pānchalakshanas): the creation and dissolution of the universe, the worship of gods, the attainment of supernatural powers and union with the Supreme Being. But here the mythological elements are missing. Further, the Tantras deal with many other topics namely, ascertainment of mantra, installation of deities, tirthas, duties of the different āśramas, support of Brāhmaņas, maintenance of other creatures, yantras, theogonic speculations, location of heavenly bodies, traditional history, vratas, cleanliness and uncleanliness, delineation of hells, cycles of existence, signs of masculinity and femineity, duties of kings, modes of charity, yugadharma, customs or legal procedure and spiritual elevation. These contents are classified into four pādas: jñāna (philosophical and doctrines), yoga (meditation to acquire magic powers), kriyā (activities connected with temple-building and idol-worship) and charvā (observances, rites, etc.).3

Tantrika Sādhanā: Man'ras, Yantras, Chakras etc. and Dīkshā

The essence of Tantra is mantra and its result is Devatasākshātkāra. The deity or devatā is conceived in three grades. At the gross (sthūla) level the deity may be imaged in a specific form. At the subtle (sūkshma) level it is nothing except mantra. highest (para) level the deity is identical with consciousness. At the first level worship is external. At the second it consists of the

¹Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 39 f.

^{*}Supra, p. 42 ff.

Bhattacharya, H.D., in AIK, p. 316.

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repetition of the mantra. Mantra is not physical vibration of an audible kind which is called (dhvani) or a sound symbol with a conventional significance. Behind the physical sound and conventional linguistic symbol there lies $n\bar{a}da$ which is like an echo in empty space—an expression of supramental self-consciousness. Thus mantra is the mind oriented towards its own source. It was believed that certain mystic words, which, were supposed to stand for certain deities, would bring before the sādhaka's eye an image of the divinity concerned. Starting with a single letter, the mantra might consist of a string ($m\bar{a}l\bar{a}$, garland) of such letters. Not only each deity but each aspect of the deity has its own special $b\bar{i}jomantra$.

Apart from mantras Tantrikism lays stress upon the yantras (i.e. diagrams of the symbolic representation of the body of the deity along with his or her bijamantra drawn on paper or metal plate or inscribed or painted on a precious stone), mudrās (i.e. special positions of fingers and movements of hands) and nyāsas (placing the different parts of the divine body on the different parts of ones own body by touching them with finger-tips and the palm). These are the means by which the sadhaka invokes and identifies himself with his ishtadevatā.2 The body of a deity is supposedly composed of the letters of the alphabet (lipi), the number being generally fixed at fifty. A sadhaka finds a correspondence between the different parts of his own body and the letters of the alphabet that make up the divine body. By nyāsa he places these letters in different parts of his own body and considers himself to be possessed of a body of mantras. By pranayama (regulation of breath) he drives the evil (pāpapurusha) that is in his own self out. Then his body becomes fit to receive the 'mother' letters (mātṛkāmantra) in the various external (bāhya) parts of the body and in the differently numbered petals of the various lotuscentres or chakras inside the bodily system. The six chakras in the body are: (1) mūlādhāra, above the organ of generation, (2) svādhishthāna (above the previous one), (3) manipura (in the spinal cord opposite the navel), (4) anahata (opposite the heart), (5) viśuddha (opposite the base of the throat) and (6) ājñā (opposite

¹Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 154 f.

²Choudhary, K.P.S., 'Tantric Mysticism', Vedanta Kesari, LI, No. 5, 1964, pp. 313-19.

the junction of the eyebrows). There are other centres, sixteen or more, beyond the $\tilde{a}j\tilde{n}\tilde{a}.^1$

The language of the tantras sometimes being enigmatical and having both exoteric and esoteric meanings, dikshā (initiation) by a proper guru is regarded essential for their proper understanding ² It is the guru who opens the eyes of the disciple to the true meaning of texts and guides him through the devious and dangerous practices to the realm of light. With the help of the guru the bound soul (paśu) heroically (with vīrabhāva) attains the divine status (divyabhāva) that is latent in every finite spirit. The characteristics of a proper guru and also of a good disciple are explained in detail in the Tāntrika texts. It is also laid down that the mode of dīkshā should vary according to the disposition of the preceptor and the disciple.

Tāntrika Sādhanā: Three Bhāvas, Pañchamakāras and Seven Āchāras

The Tantras classify mankind mainly under three heads, viz. the man with a divyabhāva or divine disposition, the man with a vīrabhāva or heroic disposition, and the man with a paśubhāva or animal disposition. The man of divya or divine disposition is above all dualities and distinctions. The Kāmākhyātantra says that such a man is the beloved of all and is sparing in his words, quiet, steady, sagacious and attentive to all. The man with vīra or heroic bhāva is physically strong, courageous, intelligent, and enterprising. He inspires fear in the man of paśu disposition and is pure in his motive. The man with paśubhāva lives a life of routine. He follows the conventional morality of society and is a slave to his six enemies—lust, anger, greed, pride, illusion and envy.³

According to the Kulārņavatantra these three dispositions fall into seven subdivisions (āchāras), four being included within the paśubhāva, two in the vīrabhāva and one in the divyabhāva. The first group of four is constituted by Vedāchāra, Vaishņavāchāra,

¹CHI, IV, p. 249.

²Cf. Suryakanta, 'Tantric Dikṣā', ABORI, XXXV, 1954, pp. 10-19; Sharma, D.B. Sen, Studies in Tantra Yoga, Karnal, 1985, p. 65 ff.

³CHI, IV, p. 242 f.

Saivāchāra and Dakshiņāchāra (sometimes the whole group is collectively described as Dakshināchāra); the second group of two is made up of Vāmāchāra and Siddhāntāchāra; and the last solitary stage is constituted by Kaulachara. In the first group external worship, devotion to Vishnu, meditation on Siva, and mental appoach to Devi or Sakti find expression in the successive four stages. In all these four social morality, rites and ceremonies are observed including avoidance of cruelity to animals, abjuration of wine and unlawful enjoyments, conjugal fidelity, control of the senses, austerity, practice of charity and the regular worship of the gods, though in the fourth stage the acquisition of magical powers by some secret Tantrika rites is not entirely forbidden.² With the fifth begins a new outlook and technique, "for the correct understanding of mystic rites, generally performed in secret at night, requires proper training at the hands of a guru and the acquisition of the necessary courage to disregard social conventions about sexual purity, to defy taboos about food and drink, and to look upon all women as manifestations of Sakti (kulanāyikā, bhairavī or yogini) and all males as representatives of Siva (bairava), there being no bar to the use of any married woman (kulastrī) for furthering personal perfection by rites, prohibited to the ordinary members of a society, which might include the use of intoxicants and of the peculiar feminine impurity as an item of bodily decoration during worship." In the Vāmāchāra stage the sādhaka tries to avoid publicity of the secret rites performed by him. "The aspirant (sādhaka) practising Siddhāntāchāra, however, is not afraid of following socially disapproved practices openly. He is relentless in the pursuit of what he thinks to be true, and is not, therefore, troubled by the opinions of others regarding what he eats and drinks, enjoys or hurts, for he holds that there is nothing that cannot be purified by appropriate means. The use of the five 'M's (pañchatattva or pañchamakāra)—madya (wine), matsya (fish) māmsa (meat), mudrā (parched grain) and maithuna (coition) under certain prescribed conditions of discipline could be made without secrecy in appropriate places and times, and was intended

¹Ibid., p. 243.

[•]AIK, p. 319.

Ibid.

to further the progress of the aspirant towards the elimination of empirical distinctions and the attainment of complete freedom". 1 According to the Kulārņavatantra just as a thorn has to be eradicated with the help of another thorn, similarly "indulgence must be forced to yield satiety and higher value". "Wine that merely intoxicates is a sinful beverage, but as the producer of a euphoric condition it is a desirable drink. Similarly, flesh that nourishes the body, fish that increases sexual potency, grain that invigorates the system, and coition that brings about a blissful condition (mahāsukha) and prolongs the race at the same time, are all intended to keep the sādhaka in a fit condition of body and mind to pursue spiritual aims. It is obvious that in the case of some gross minds they failed to serve their legitimate purpose, specially when promiscuity was permitted with different types of women, mostly coming from lower castes and dubbed as śaktis. There was, however, a general prohibition against using any woman except one's wife for the purpose of the last of the five tativas (maithuna), and there were also other restrictions. The idea was that a sādhaka must go beyond dualities of all kinds-of love and hate, merit and demerit, touchable and untouchable, forbidden and non-forbidden, or delectable and nauseating in food and drink, prohibited and non-prohibited in sex relation, male and female friend and foe, etc., -and cultivate not only equanimity in himself but also equality towards all".2

Kaulāchāra

The literal meaning of Kaulāchāra, the last stage, is the āchāra of the Kaulas (that is worshippers of kula or śakti). The Kaulas were a branch of the Śāktas. According to R.G. Bhandarkar the Śāktas may be divided into two classes, Kaulika and Samayins. The Kaulikas worship Śrī Chakra (the symbol of Tripurasundarī) in gross material form while the Samayins worship its imagery. The Kaulikas or Kaulas are further divided into Pūrva Kaulas and the Uttara Kaulas. The Pūrva Kaulas worship the picture of Śrī Chakra (=a picture of female organ in the centre of a circle consisting of nine such organs drawn on a silken cloth or gold

¹*Ibid.*, p. 320,

^{*}Ibid.

leaf, or bhūrjapatra) while the Uttara Kaulas worship the organ of a living beautiful woman. The Kaulas worship their goddess by offering to her (and themselves using) wine, flesh, honey, fish and such other things. There were even Brāhmaṇas who worshipped their goddess Tripurasundarī in accordance with the Pūrva Kaula or Uttara Kaula way. During the worship of Tripurasundarī, it is believed, all castes become Brāhmaṇa; the worshipper gets his caste back when the worship is over.¹

Kaulāchāra is described by several works as the highest ideal and the last stage of Sādhanā. It could be reached only after a particular stage of spiritual development. It brings Mahāsukha. This is the divya condition in which the sādhaka goes beyond the likes and dislikes of the worldly life, like god himself, for whom all things are equal. Difference between pity and cruelty, good and bad conduct, becomes meaningless. Just as in one Upanishad it is stated that to one who has attained Brahmajñāna no sin attaches for any kind of act, so the Tantras place the Kaula (= worshipper of Šakti in the highest stage) above all moral judgments and put no restraints in his way, for he has pierced the evil of space and time. A Kaula roams in all āchāras at will being at heart a Śākta, outworldly a Śaiva and in social gatherings a Vaishṇava. He sees himself in all things and all things in himself.²

As usual we have very exalted explanations of the origin, nature and objectives of the Kaula sādhanā. In the Kaulajñānanir-naya (11th cent.) we have a description of the various āchāras of the Kaulas which must have developed in course of centuries before its composition. Actually, according to this work, by the time it was composed the Kaulas had become divided into a number of schools following different Yoga systems.³

Thus the Kaulas were not afraid of following the socially disapproved practices openly. The use of Pañchamakāras was a must for them. According to H.D. Bhattacharya the Kaulāchāra was of Buddhist origin and its tenets were first formulated by a dombī in 8th century. According to the Kaulajñānanirṇaya the Kaula method of self-realization was prevalent among the

¹Cf. Bhandarkar, R.G., op. cit., p. 209.

^{*}AIK, p. 321.

Ibid.

Buddhists and Nathists. However criticism of the Kaula practices is found in literature from 10th century onwards. They have been criticised by Rajasekhara in his Karpūramanjarī, by Kshemendra in his Daśāvatāracharita and by Hemachandra in his Trishashţiśalākāpurushacharita.1

Rise and Development of Tantrikism: Tantrikism in pre-Pauranika India

As we have seen in the first volume of the present work, the roots of several elements of Tantrikism may be traced back to the pre-Vedic and Vedic religious ideas.2 The pre-Vedic religion of India consisted of the cult of the Mother Goddess, worship of linga and yoni, sexual dualism (the concept of the duality of the Male and Female principles of creation) and the practice of Yoga. All these elements were components of an undifferentiated religious and ritualistic complex, which subsequently came to be known as the Tantrika tradition. In the Vedic religion also many elements of Tantrikism already existed, many others were successfully absorbed and some others unsuccessfully tried to become legitimised by the sacred texts. Numerous rituals mainly sexual in character, designed to secure the fertility of fields are recognised in the Vedas. For them ingenious explantions were offered later on. Practices like māraņa, vasīkaraņa etc. are distinctly mentioned in the different parts of the Vedic literature. Many of the Atharvanika practices of witchcraft are almost identical with similar practices of the Tantras. The Vedic texts prescribe Somayajñas and Haviryajñas which included libations and drinks of intoxicating liquor. The SB states that wine is always pure and hence purifies the sacrificer. The ritual of purifying the body by uttering some mantras as $b\bar{i}jas$ while meditating the divinities on certain parts of the body and touching those parts as prescribed in the Vedic texts corresponds to the Tantrika nyasa. The use of apparently meaningless mystic sounds like khat, phat, hum, etc. are also found in Vedic texts 3

¹Ibid.

^{*}RHAI, I, p. 337 ff.

Bhattacharya, N.N., op. cit., p. 172,

Impact of Tantrikism on Pauranika Religion

From about the beginning of the fifth century A.D., if not earlier, the Vaishnavas, and probably also the Saivas, came under the influence of Tantrikism. The extant Samhitas of the Pancharatras are perhaps the earliest available records of this influence. The Jayākhya Samhitā, which has been assigned by B. Bhattacharya to about 450 A.D. and which is regarded as one of the three most ancient and most authoritative works of the Pañcharatra Agama1 prescribes rites and practices (in the method of taking a religious bath, practice of Samādhi and mantra-nyāsa, worship of Vishņu, method of initiation and methods of devatā-pratishțhā, śrāddha, cremation of a dead body, prāyaśchitta etc.) which are not at all guided by the authorities of the Vedic schools and are highly inbued with Tantrika practices.2 The discovery of a manuscript of the characters Kubjikāmatatantra written in Gupta Tantrika works began to be composed in the Gupta age itself. The Gangadhar stone inscription (423 A.D.) of Viśvarman also suggests that the Tantrika cult influenced Vaishnavism and attained popularity at a very early period. As regards the Saivas, it is not yet definitely known when did they begin to be influenced by Tantrikism and to produce the Saiva Agamas, but the possibility that the Tantrika influence was imbibed by them quite early cannot be denied.3

However, the emergence of Tāntrikism was not welcomed by the traditionalists. It must be remembered that the existence of Tāntrika elements in the Vedic religion and the claim that the Tantras are vedātmaka noted above did not mean that Tāntrikism was wholly in tune with the Vedic tradition and was accepted as such by the orthodox sections of society. On the other hand, the orthodox Brāhmaṇas were opposed to it because its practices and social outlook was against the general spirit of the Vedic tradition and Paurāṇika religion both. Firstly, Tāntrikism emphasised the equality of race, caste and sex (cf. p. 414 f., the section on the social outlook of Hindu Tāntrikism). The freedom which the Tantras allow to the members of all castes in worshipping the deities discouraged priesthood seriously. Its rituals did not require gifts to

¹Hazra, R.C., Purănic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs, p. 218.
²Ibid., pp. 219-22.

^{*}Ibid., p. 224 f.

be made to the Brahmanas. Secondly, many of the vamachara practices were really repulsive and demoralising. They required among other things an equal number of men and women without distinction of caste or relationship, and the partaking of the five tattvas, viz., wine, meat, fish, parched grain and sexual intercourse. Thirdly, the Tantrikas believed in sorcery which could be used for either white or black purposes. According to R.C. Hazra¹ it was probably due to this originally strained relationship between the Tantras and the Puranas that the Pauranika chapters on vows, worship etc., which were added before 800, A.D., are comparatively freer of the Tantrika influence. However even then a few Tantrika elements crept into the Puranas. These include Mantra-nyāsa, use of Tāntrika mantras for abhichāra, the drawing of coloured lotuses (padma) or circles (mandala, chakra) during worship in vows, consecration etc., and the worship of virgin girls in the Vira-vrata. According to Hazra it was from about the end of the eighth or the beginning of the ninth century A.D. that the Puranas began to recognise the Tantras as one of the authorities on religious matters, though with some restrictions.² Devibhāgavata says: "For the deliverance of those best Brāhmaņas who were burnt by the curses of Daksha, Bhrgu and Dadhicha, and were caused to deviate from the path of the Vedas, the Āgamas of the Šaivas, Vaishņavas, Sauras, Šāktas and Gāņapatyas were written as steps (sopāna) by Śańkara. In some places of these works there are some portions which do not go against the Vedas. By accepting these (portions) the Vaidikas do not incur sin." In the Varāha P. Nārāyana recommends, next to the Vedas, the sectarian scriptures of the Pancharatras thus: "By worshipping me through the Purusha Sūkta and the study of the Samhitas, O twice-born, people always attain me in no time. I am attainable to those people (also) who, being unable to acquire (knowledge of) the Vedas, worship me after the direction of the Pancharatras". The Bhavishya P. recognises the Tantras as an authority on the consecration of trees, parks, tanks etc. The Skanda P. says that Sambhu can be realised through the Vedas, Purāņas, Upanishads and the various Agamas. The Brahma P. speaks of a king named

¹*Ibid.*, p. 260 f.

²Įbid.

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Indradyumna who consulted the Tantras, Itihāsa, Purāṇas etc. to learn the method of worshipping Hari.¹ This gradual recognition of the authority of the Tantras is also reflected in those chapters on initiation, worship etc. which were added to the Purāṇas later than the beginning of the ninth century A.D. According to Hazra the extent of this inclusion even as early as about the tenth and eleventh centuries A.D. is found best in the Garuḍa and the Agni Purāṇas which prescribe the frequent performance of nyāsas and mudrās and the use of mystic Tāntrika spells and recognise the use of yantras as a medium of worship.²

Tantra and Vaishnavism

As a result of the Tantrika influence now all the five major Pauranika systems (*Panchopāsanā*) viz. Vaishnava, Śaiva, Śakta, Saura and Gānapatya, by which the present Hinduism is constituted, have two forms—Vedic and Tantrika.

Tantrika elements began to make their way into Vaishnavism through the cults of the Mother Goddesses who later came to be identified with the consort of Vishnu. In the Vishnu P, the female principle is regarded as Mahālakshmī, the consort of Vishņu. The Mārkandeya P. describes the goddess as Vishnumāyā, the Šakti or energy of Vishnu, and Nārāyanī, the wife of Nārāyana. Mātrkās have also been connected with Vaishnavism and we have the concept of the goddess Vaishnavi as one of the seven or eight Divine Mothers. The concept of the Tantrika goddess Varahi may also be mentioned in this connection. However, it is only in the Lakshmītantra, a Pañcharātra text of the 9th-11th centuries which is regarded as authoritative even by the Sakta Tantrikists, that we find a distinct atimārgika form of the Vaishnava cult in which the principles of vamachara Tantrikism are found clearly operating. For the early stages of the impact of Tantrikism on Vaishnavism we have only the Jayākhya Samhitā which has been assigned to about 450 A.D. by B. Bhattacharya (supra) and which prescribes rites and practices imbued with Tantrika elements. To some extent the evidence of literature is supported by the fragmentary Gangadhar inscription of the Malava year 480 (423 A.D.) which

^{&#}x27;All quoted by Hazra, ibid.

²¹bid., p. 262.

records that one Mayūrāksha caused to be built for the sake of his religious merit "this very terrible abode full of Dakinis of the Divine Mothers, who utter loud and tremendous shouts in joy (and) who stir up the (very) oceans with the mightly wind rising from the Tantrika rites." Here the most interesting point is that Mayūrāksha, who was responsible for the erection of the temple, was a devout Vaishnava as is mentioned in the inscription itself.

Tantra and Saivism

Tantrika elements have been traced in the worship of Siva even in the proto-historic period.² According to J.N. Banerjea many of the seals or seal-amulets found in the Harappan sites bear unmistakable traces of Tantrikism and some of the composite figures engraved on the seals remind us of the hybrid figures of pramathas and ganas, attendants of the historic Siva.3 In the RV Rudra symbolises the dreadful and destructive forces of nature. The Keśi-sūkta reminds us of the atimārgika followers of the pāsupata creed.4 It mentions a class of ascetics who were halfnaked, or had only short brown garments soiled with dust, kept long hair and were frenzied. This appears to bear some affinity with the practices of Rudra-Siva and his worshippers specially since the tradition of Rudra's drinking the poison is connected in this hymn with Keśi. The Satarudriya verses of the YV contain one hundred names of Rudra, some of which allude to his terrific and others to his auspicious form. The legend of Daksha's sacrifice as given in the epics and the Puranas indicates that the Pasupata conception of Rudra or Siva arose outside the pale of Vedism (Vedabāhya) and the orthodox followers of the Veda did not acknowledge it readily. The Nārāyanīya section of the Mbh. names the Pasupata school as one of the five systems—Sāmkhya, Yoga, Pañcharatra, Veda and Pasupata. According to this classification Veda and Pasupata were different from and independent of each other. The Atharvasīras Upanishad refers to Pāsupatavrata,

¹Cf. Goyal, Guptakálina Abhilekha, p. 347.

²RHAI, 1, p. 338.

⁸DHI, p. 161.

⁴RHAI, I, p. 94 f.

the main feature of which was the ceremonial touching of the different limbs with ashes after the pattern of the Tantrika nyāsa.1

Pāsupata practices like krāthana (feigning sleep when really awake), spandana (appearing to have no control over the limbs when walking). srngarana (expressing erotic gestures at the sight of women), avitatkarana (indulging in apparently unsocial acts). avitadbhāshaṇa (speaking absurd and senseless words), etc. have been condemned by Kaundinya as anti-Brahmanical acts. In the same vein the Bhagavata P. composed by a Vaishnava describes Siva as markatalochana (monkey-eyed) roaming in the cremation grounds with pretas and bhūtas, aśuchi (impure), kriyāhīna (bereft of any rites), digambara (naked), with matted locks on his head, walking here and there like a mad man, bathing in ashes, wearing bones and garland of skulls as ornaments, sometimes laughing and at other times crying, mad himself and lover of the insane, inauspicious (asiva) though named Siva, endowed with ugly qualities and so on. Actually all the atimārgika sects like the Kāpālikas, Kālāmukhas, Aghorapanthis, etc. were treated with contempt by the orthodox Brāhmaņas for their Tāntrika leanings (supra).

Between the 10th and 13th centuries there flourished an Āgamika Śaiva sect called the Mattamayūra in central India. It was comparatively moderate in outlook. The teachers of its monasteries adopted -śambhu or -śiva ending names (e.g. Rudraśambhu, Dharmasambhu, Mahāsiva etc.). A tribe known as the Mattamayūra is mentioned in the Mbh. (Sabhāparvan, 32, 4-5). In the Pala period the Mattamayūras existed in Bengal also. They insisted on Yoga and social works like feeding the poor, building hospitals, establishing schools etc. H. Goetz suggests that the Mattamayūras were responsible for the sensual bas-reliefs of the Khajuraho temples.²

Tantra in Śaktism

Although Tantrikism has played a significant role in Buddhism, Vaishnavism and Saivism also, it is in the Sakta religion that the Tantrika ideas and practices found the most favourable ground for

¹Bhattacharya, History of the Tantric Religion, p. 199.

²Cf. Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 268 f.

their development. It is true that there is place for a goddess in other religious systems also, but in them she is usually conceived as the wife or consort of the male god, and where the Tantrika influence is greater, she is conceived as his inherent Sakti. In Saktism, on the other hand, she is supreme, other gods being subordinate to her. According to the cosmogony of the Sakta Purānas the Great Goddess, as Ādyā Śakti or primeval energy, created from her own body Brahmā, Vishņu, and Śiva, and then having divided her own self into three parts mated with them as a result of which life and the universe came into existence.1

Though Tantrikist tendencies in the Devi worship are traced in the Vedas,2 historically the introduction of Tantrikism in Sakti worship as early as the Gupta age is proved by the Gangadhar inscription of 423 A.D. in which it is said that one Mayūrāksha caused to be built the terrible abode (veśmātyugram) filled with Dakinis of the Divine Mothers who uttered loud shouts of joy and who stirred up the very oceans with the mighty winds arising from the Tantrika rites. Here the term veśmatyugram deserves to be noted because the temple, which could not have been ugra (terrible) by itself, has been so described obviously because of the terrible nature of the rites indulged in by the worshipper there.3 As regards the Dakinis, in much later Tantrika texts the names of Pākinīs, Lākinīs Śākinīs and Yoginīs are mentioned. The later lexicons explain the name Dakini as a special kind of the ganas of Kālī (Dākinī Kālīgaņavišeshah).4 P.C. Bagchi opines that these subordinate deities might have been imported from Western Tibet and incorporated in the Śākta Tāntrika ritualism. S. B. Dasgupta partially supports this suggestion by tracing its root in the word dāka used in Tibet in the sense of 'a wise man'. But J.N. Baneriea has pointed out that the present inscription particularly emphasises the shouting propensity of the Mothers and their ganas and the word ghoshini (ghoshini and dakini mean the same thing) occurs in the Atharvaveda to denote the female attendants of the terrific god Rudra.5

¹Bhattacharya, N.N., op. cit., p. 261 f.

²Agrawala, V.S., Devi Māhātmya, Varanasi, 1963, pp. 239-48.

Banerjea, PTR, p. 128 f.

Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

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The number of yoginis is mentioned in some late Purāṇas and some Śākta texts as 64 (Chatuḥshashṭi-Yoginī). The Agni P. fixes the number of Mātṛkās as eight and also gives the names of the Ashṭāshṭaka goddesses (8 × 8 = 64) who are worshipped in maṇḍalas. That these Ashṭāshṭaka goddesses were worshipped in maṇḍalas is further proved by the Bheraghat (near Jabalpur), Khajuraho, Hirapur (near Bhubaneswar, Orissa) and Ranipur Jharial (near Sambalpur, Orissa) temple complexes of the 64 Yoginīs. With the exception of the Khajuraho complex they are round in form. This particular arrangement of the shrines helps us to understand the significance of the expression Maṇḍalakrama-vidāḥ used in the Bṛhatsamhitā to denote the devotees of the Mātṛkās.¹

Tāntrikism in Gāņapatya Sect

Tāntrikism influenced Gāṇapatya sect also. Gaṇeśa was originally a name of Rudra for he was regarded as the leader of the ganas. Gradually Ganesa became a distinct deity, was identified with a primitive elephant god, and from the creator of obtacles became a Siddhidata (bestower of success). It is natural to expect that as an ancient tribal deity Ganesa had something to do with primitive Tāntrikism. In Ānandagiri's Śańkaradigvijaya six branches of Gāṇapatyas are mentioned.2 One of them, the Uchchhishta Gāṇapatyas, were undeniably Tantrikists. They conceived Gaṇeśa as having three eyes and four arms, three arms holding pāśa, ankuśa and gada and the fourth being in abhaya mudra. They showed him as drinking intoxicating liquor with his trunk and engaged in kissing and embracing his Sakti sitting on his lap. In many sculptures he is found with Mātrkās. The Uchchhishta Gāṇa patyas drank wine, did not differentiate between merit and demerit, did not find fault in indiscriminate sexual intercourse and did not observe caste rules and samskaras.3

¹Ibid., p. 129; cf. Joshi, M.C., 'Śākta Tāntrism in the Gupta Age', in Aruṇa Bhāratī, ed. by B. Datta, Baroda, 1983, pp. 77-81; also Desai, Devangana, 'Mother Goddess and Her Partner,' ibid., pp. 329 ff.

²Bhattacharya, op. cit., p. 271.

⁸Ibid., p. 271 f.

Tantrikism and the Concept of Panchopasana

In course of time the five major cults-Vaishnava, Śaiva, Śakta Ganapatya and Saura came to terms with each other as a result of which a composite religious system known as Pañchopāsanā came into existence. It was decided that each sect should basically worship its own deity as the Supreme Being but without disregarding the deities of other sects. The Tantras adopted the same attitude. The Tantrasāra, for example, prescribes that Bhavānī should be worshipped at the centre and Vishnu at the north-east corner, Siva at the south-west, Ganapati at the south-east and Sūrya at the north-west.¹ Their common adherence to a common ideology facilitated this outlook. As a result of this attitude syncretistic icons like those of Hari-Hara, Śiva-Śakti, Śiva-Sūrya, Vishņu-Sūrya Mārtanda-Bhairava etc. were made and worshipped.²

Tantra in Jainism

Elements of Tantrikism in the form of the Mother Goddess cult, magical rites, curative spells, incantations, efficacy of mantra, etc., are also met within Jainism and Buddhism.3 Like the Buddha Mahāvīra is also said to have performed numerous miracles. owing to the rigid nature of Jainism, Tantrikism could produce no permanent effect on the former except that the efficacy of the mantras was recognised. Tārā was included in the Jaina pantheon Sachiādevī, a Jaina goddess, began to be propitiated in the Śākta manner, many Jaina religious teachers and monks made efforts to acquire control over the sixty-four Yoginis4 and the worship of Siva under Śūnya-nirañjana form which was popular among the Nāthas, made some headway among the Jainas. The Jainas regarded the Natha teachers as their own saints. Krshnadasa, a Gujarati poet, sang of Machchhindra and Gorakha as two Jaina saints. The Parasanathi and Minanathi sects, which entered the fold of Gorakshanātha, were in all probability Jaina sects. It appears from medieval Rasa literature that the residents of the

¹*Ibid.*, p. 272.

² Ibid., p. 273; cf. Maitra, J., 'Martanda-Bhairava', in Religious Life in Ancient India, ed. by D.C. Sircar, p. 94 ff.

For Tantrika Buddhism, vide RHAI, I, pp. 336-55.

^{&#}x27;Yadava, B.N.S., Society and Culture in Northern India, p. 360; Bagchi, in IHQ, VII, 1931, No. 1, p. 4 f.

Jaina chaityas lavishly consumed the wealth and riches donated by merchants. Hence the saints of Kharataragachchha had to introduce many reforms in Jainism.¹

Significance of the Tantras

The evaluation of the Tantras is a matter of great controversy. On the one hand they have been praised as the repository of sublime truths, an indispensable means to the attainment of the highest spirituality and the greatest contribution of India to world culture² and it has been maintained that "the Tantric culture is the greatest of all cultures because it aims at the spiritual perfection and psychic development of man", while on other hand they have been branded as a type of composition containing unmeaning jargon, mysterious mummery, veiled and open obscenity and dark rites. R.C. Dutt4 considered them to be the symptom of the 'diseased mind' of society. To most sympathetic modern scholars the Tantras appear at the most a strange mixture of higher and lower thoughts, of strenuous discipline and moral laxity, of sound understanding and primitive credulity.5 The chief complaints against the Tantra are that it permitted women to enter into its fold for the purpose of Tantrika prectices and prescribed and encouraged the use of panchamakāras (sex, wine etc.) in sādhanā and thus encouraged corruption and immorality, that it advocated idolatry and made its followers degenerate into mere idol worshippers and that it increased superstition in society (for instance the Narapatijaya-charyā-svarodaya reveals that magical formulas acquired undue prominence in the operations of war).6 Those who defend the Tantras explain away the use of panchamakāras, specially of wine and sex as purely symbolic. But, as pointed out by G.C. Pande, while there is no doubt that symbolism was involved, the actual use of makāras was also known.7 According

¹Buddha Prakash, Aspects of Indian History and Civilization, Agra, 1965, p. 308.

²Bhattacharya, B., An Introduction to Buddhist Esoterism, p. 165.

^{*}Ibid., p. 173 f.

⁴Dutt, R.C., History and Civilization in Ancient India, II, pp. 212-13.

⁶Cf. AIK, p. 317 f.

^{&#}x27;Yadava, B.N.S., op. cit., p. 361.

Pande, G.C., Spiritual Vision, p. 158.

to H.D. Bhattacharya also it can hardly be denied that in their attempt to provide a comprehensive scheme of social life. individual perfection, and religious devotion, the Tantras did occasionally fail to keep the baser elements in proper check.1 But the Tantrika tendencies have also some notable contributions to in the socio-cultural sphere. According Bhattacharya the Tantras begin where Rajayoga and Hathayoga end. The Rajayoga and Hathayoga give control over mind and body; Tantrika practices give various magic powers (siddhis) according to the different types of sadhana. From this it follows that the highest degree of intellectual power which is attained after one perfects himself in Rajayoga and Hathayoga is necessary to follow the path of Tantra and that it cannot be, and in fact never was, meant for all. When it became the common property of all, abuses of its tenets followed as a matter of course. But how can this fact belittle the importance or greatness of the Tantra? Tantra was divided both in Hinduism and Buddhism into various sections. In Hindu Tantrikism Dakshinachara or right handed path is to be followed first, after which Vāmāchāra or left handed path is permitted. In Dakshinachara strict celibacy, restriction of food, drink etc. are necessary. It is only when the sādhaka is sufficiently advanced in it that he is permitted to practise Vāmāchāra rites with the help of the pañchamakāras. Similar is the case with Buddhism in which the sadhaka first practises Krivātantra and Charyātantra involving strict celibacy and restrictions on food and drinks etc. and only after this is he permitted to enter the mysteries of Yogatantra in which the help of women is regarded necessary.

So far as the accusation of idolatry is concerned, in Tantrikism the deities are regarded as merely the different forms of the highest spirit or Sakti. They may be compared with the sparks coming out of the divine spirit which the yogins visualize and give concrete form in order that the sadhakas might concentrate on them before being able to realize the supreme truth. Once they attain this objective, images become meaningless for them.

Some other contributions of the Tantra may be noted briefly. As amply revealed by the Rasārņava (c. 12th century A.D.) the

¹AIK, p. 326.

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Tantra contributed a great deal to the development of Indian chemistry. Further the idea of bhakti of a personal deity, an important element of Tāntrika worship, gave impetus to the emergence of the medieval bhakti movement and the Nātha cult, which branched off the Tāntrika Sahajayāna, prepared the way for Kabīr, Dādu and Nānaka.

Social Outlook of the Tantras

One of the causes of the survival of Tantrikism as a tradition parallel to the Vedic one was the adherence of the so-called lower people to its way of life. The Tantra clearly rejects the caste system, concedes equality to women, and criticizes all external formalities in regard to spiritual quest. As pointed out by Hazra the Tantra offers to all, with freedom from Vaidika exclusiveness, the practical method which qualifies the sadhaka for the reception of the higher doctrine of the path of knowledge (Jñānamārga). The Sūdras and women are not, as in the case of Vaidikāchāra, under any ban. As the Gautamiyatantra says people of all castes, whether men or women may receive its mantras. In the Chakra there is no caste at all; even the lowest Chāṇḍāla being deemed, whilst there in, higher than Brahmanas. The Mahānirvānatantra says: 'That low Kaula who refuses to initiate a Chandala or a Yavana into the Kaula-dharma, considering him to be inferior, or a woman, out of disrespect for her, goes the downward way. All two-footed beings in this world, from the Vipra to the inferior castes, are competent for Kulāchāra.' According to the Tantras worthy women can serve even as spiritual preceptors under certain conditions.3 The five great Tantrika teachers, regarded in the Natha tradition as Adi-siddhas, came from the lower sections of society. Many of the other eighty-four Siddhas also belonged to the lower castes and asked others to follow their own crafts

¹We have discussed the Nātha sect in RHAI, I, p. 351 f.

²Yadava, op. cit. For a detailed study vide Chattopadhyaya, Sudhakar, Reflections on the Tantras, Delhi, 1978; Mishra, Kamalakar, Significance of the Tantric Tradition, Varanasi; Kane, P.V., History of Dharmaśāstra, V, Pt. II, p. 1091 ff.

³Hazra, Purāņic Records, p. 224 f.

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honestly and sincerely. The upholders to the santa tradition also came mostly from the non-privileged social strata. This theory and practice is in virtual opposition to that upheld in the Smārta-Paurāṇika tradition. It is one of the reasons why the followers of this system were condemned by the orthodox sections of society.

Chapter 18

Religions from Beyond the Borders (i): Christianity and Zoroastrianism

Hebraic Background of Christianity

Judaism constitutes the religious doctrines and rites of the Jews, the descendants of the ancient Hebrews. It entered India probably as early as the first cent A.D., for several small Hebrew communities existed in Texila, Konkan and Malabar regions when St. Thomas and St. Bartholomew are said to have visited this country shortly after the death of Jesus (infra). Though the influence of the Hebrews on Indian religious history has been negligible, yet here a brief survey of their history and religious evolution will be useful because Judaism provided the background for the rise of two other great religions, namely Christianity and Islam, which have been of much greater significance in Indian history, specially in medieval and modern periods.

As early as c. 1600 B.C. a group of Hebrews² under the leadership of Abraham had settled in north-western Mesopotamia. Abraham's son Jacob, subsequently called Israel, led a migration westeward and began the occupation of Palestine. Sometimes after 1400 B.C. certain Israelite tribes went down into Egypt where they were enslaved by the Pharaoh's government. Around 1300-1250 B.C. they escaped to the Sinai Peninsula under the leadership of Moses who persuaded them to become the worshippers of Yahweh. Welded by him into a confederation, the Hebrew

¹Cf. Abraham, C.E., 'The Rise and Growth of Christianity in India', CHI, IV, p. 547.

²For a brief history of the Hebrews and their religion and culture in Hindi, see, Goyal, S.R., Viśva kī Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen, Gorakhpur, 1962, p. 265 ff.

tribes now began the conquest of Palestine or the Land of Cannan. Around 1025 B.C. Saul founded the Hebrew monarchy. He was followed by mighty David who in turn was succeeded by his son Solomon, remembered by the Jews as one of the wisest, justest and most enlightened rulers in all history. After his death in 935 B.C., however, the Jewish state became divided into the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. In 722 B.C. the Ten Tribes of the kingdom of Israel were conquered by the Assyrians and were absorbed and lost in their vast empire. The kingdom of Judah was conquered in 586 B.C. by the Chaldeans and subsequently became vassal in turn of the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Ptolemids of Egypt and finally the Romans (63 B.C.). Its political history ended in 70 A.D. when it was annexed as a province in the Roman empire and its inhabitants were gradually dispersed into other parts of the empire. This event is known as the Diaspora or dispersion of the Jews from Palestine.

Stages of Hebrew Religious Evolution

According to E.M. Burns¹ the Hebrew religion passed through atleast five stages. Its pre-Mosaic stage was characterized by animism which gradually gave way to anthropomorphism, worship of spirits that dwell in trees, mountains, wells etc. and diverse forms of magic. In the second stage which is usually designated as the stage of national monolatry (exclusive worship of one god without the denial of others), the Hebrews under the leadership of Moses gradually adopted as their national deity a god whose name appears to have been written as 'Jhwh' but was probably pronounced as Yahweh (not Jehovah as is popularly believed). Yahweh was conceived in anthropomorphic terms, had emotional qualities of man, and was capable of good and evil judgements. He was not omnipotent as his power was limited to Palestine. Though he was revered as the supreme law-giver, yet his religion was primarily neither ethical, nor spiritual. According to Biblical account he issued the Ten Commandments to Moses on

¹Burns, E.M., Western Civilizations, New York, 1949, p. 79 ff.; for a brief outline of Hebrew religion vide Bultmann, Rudolf, Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting, New York, 1956; de Burgh, W.G., The Legacy of the Ancient World, 2 yols., Pelican Books, 1953.

the top of Mt. Sinai, but modern scholar generally do not accept this tradition and believe that in their present form the Ten Commandments are not older than the seventh century B.C.

In the third or the post-Moses period of Hebrew religious evolution superstition and idolatry gradually increased in the worship of Yahweh The work of reform was carried out first by a fanatical preacher Elijah and afterwards by the great prophets Amos, Hosea, Isaiah and Micah. They emphasised monotheism, denied the existence of gods other than Yahweh, described him as the god of righteousness and declared that the purpose of religion is chiefly ethical. However as yet the Hebrew religion contained little of a spiritual character and hardly a trace of mysticism.

The fourth stage of the Hebrew religion was the result of the Babylonian captivity where the Jews adopted the ideas of pessimism, fatalism and transcendence of God. Now they emphasized that man's chief duty is to submit absolutely to His inscrutable will. Further, in an attempt to preserve their identity as a nation, the Hebrew leaders revived customs and observances which could serve to distinguish them as a distinct people. It tended to increase the power of priests.

In its fifth and final stage the Hebrew religion was heavily influenced by Persian Zoroastrianism and adopted dualistic, messianic, other-worldly and esoteric tendencies. Now Satan became the great adversary of God and the author of evil. It was a far cry from strict monotheism and simple ethical religion of the prophets.

The Bible

The world bible comes from the Greek words ta biblia meaning 'the books'. This is the plural of biblion, from biblos, the Greek word for papyrus, the plant from which paper for books was made. The present Bible is divided into the Old Testament, having thirtynine books, and the New Testament, with twenty-seven books. It took more than thirteen hundred years to produce these scriptures.

The Old Testament was divided by the Jews into three parts: (1) Torah or Law, consisting of the Pentateuch, (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy) ascribed to Moses.¹ (2) The Prophets, which were divided into former and later prophets. The former prophets include Joshua, Judges, Samuel. Kings; the latter, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and several minor prophets. (3) The third part is known as the Writings (Hagiogrpha)—Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, and Esther. The remaining books are Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles. This canon was not finally set until well after the time of Christ; for Jesus himself the scriptures meant only the Law and the Prophets.²

The New Testament was written from about 50 A.D. to about 150 A.D. Its twenty-seven books are usually divided as follows: Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John (which describe 'the good news' and the life of Jesus), four books; History (which describes the acts of Apostles, particularly of Paul), one book; Pauline epistles, thirteen books; general epistles, eight books; and Apocalypse (Revelations), one book. The four Gospels, were in circulation in the Christian churches by the second half of the second century A.D. The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke are so similar in language and structure that they are known as Synoptic Gospels. The Gospel of John is utterly different. It describes Jesus as a god. According to it the divine Logos, the Word or Reason of God, became flesh. It records that John the Baptist saw the Spirit descending on Jesus and proclaimed him to be the son of God. Thenceforth Jesus acted and spoke like a god.3

Life of Christ

Christianity has dominated a large population of the world, specially the western world. It had its origin in the teachings of Jesus, 4 a Jew by birth. Very few reliable facts about his life are known. The Gospels, as their name implies, were not meant to be his biographies but records of 'the good news' which the Christian

¹A patently false assumption not only for reasons of literary criticism, but also because Moses could have scarcely recorded his own death.

²Smart, Ninian, The Religious Experience of Mankind, New York, 1969, p. 342.

³Compare the transformation of the character of Rāma in the Rāmā, from an ideal human hero into an avatāra of Vishņu.

⁴Jesus is the Greek transliteration of an Aramaic name pronounced Yeshua, It was altered into Jesus in English.

community was propogating. Their authors were not so much concerned with the details of his career as with his teachings and the events of his death and resurrection.¹

Did Jesus ever live? Was he a man who somehow became deified or a god who somehow became humanized? These questions have agitated the mind of Christian scholars for a long time. Those who claim that Jesus is a myth point out that in the Gospels. specially of John, he figures as a worker of miracles possible only for a God, and himself rises from the dead the third day. The fourth Gospel also explicitly says that he is God. The Pauline Epistles and the Apocalypse speak of him as a divine being. The historicists, on the other hand, claim that Jesus is not merely a God. Even for the Church he is God and man, and a man, moreover. who lived at a particular moment of history in a particular Roman province. The Synoptic Gospels nowhere call him God and Pauline Epistles give him a human ancestry and human brothers. An important section of early Church held him to be a man who achieved divine sonship. And, lastly, the ancient opponents of Christianity nowhere question his historicity. Matthew and Luke trace his descent through Joseph back to David.² As regards Virgin Mary, his mother, according to Christian scriptural and orthodox position Lord Christ being the eternal Son of God became man being conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of Virgin Mary and inasmuch as he is thus man and God both, so she is.3

Jesus is said to have born at a small village outside Jerusalem called Bethleham where his parents happened to be staying during the taking of a census. According to the Synoptic Gospels shortly before the appearance of Jesus, John the Baptist, a fiery and prophetic figure, foretold the coming of 'a mighty one.' The birth of Jesus may very well have taken place in the yard of a carvanserai. The stories of the magi, of the shepherds and of the massacre of the children as well as the flight into Egypt, may easily contain a substratum of fact. Nazareth, the well-known north

¹Smart, N., op. cit., p. 402.

²Vide Robertson, A., Jesus: Myth or History, London, 1946, p. 93.

²Cooper, James, in *ERE*, 8, p. 474. According to A.C. Bouquet (*Comparative Religions*, Melbourne, 1954, p. 237 f.) the story of Virgin Birth appears as an article of faith after 70 A.D.

Bouquet, op. cit., p. 235.

Palestinian town of Galilee seems to have been the final home of the family. Joseph is described as a carpenter and builder. There is no special reason for doubting the truth of the story of the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem when he was of the age of twelve. After that there is complete absence of information until he has nearly reached the age of thirty. Some believe that during this interval he lived in India as a Hindu or Buddhist monk.

Jesus was baptised by John the Baptist. Now he saw the vision of God's spirit descending like a dove on him. He heard a voice say unto him 'Thou art my beloved son. I am well pleased with thee' The event made a tremendous impact on him and gave him an experience suggestive of his own messiahhood.² Like the Buddha he was tempted to use his powers for selfish ends but after meditating in wilderness for forty days returned to Galilee to preach. He went about doing good, preaching and teaching about the kingdom of God, calling men to repentance, cleansing them from sin, and healing their bodies and souls. He is said to have performed great wonders in raising the dead, feeding the multitudes, stilling the storm, and casting out demons. He taught as one having authority, and did not fully follow the customs of the Jewish rabbis,³ so he incurred the enmity and jealousy of the scribes and the Pharisees, who plotted to kill him.

Jesus had himself predicted three times that he would die at the hands of the Jewish authorities. The charge against him was that of treason, of advising the people against paying tribute to Caesar¹ and of his setting up as the King of the Jews. When he was arrested, most of his disciples ran away for fear that they too might be captured. But Peter drew his sword and tried to rescue him. However, Jesus calmed him: "They that take the sword", he said, "shall perish by the sword". Anyway, the Pilate passed sentence upon him and ordered him to be nailed in accordance with the Roman custom to a wooden cross. The real reason for

¹Sivananda, Swami, World Religions, Rishikesh, 1947, p. 198.

²Smart, N., op. cit., p. 406.

³In one or two passages of the New Testament Jesus is addressed as rabbi (Master) and he certainly functioned in the synagogues much as a rabbi might.

^{&#}x27;He actually preached the contrary: "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's". It was explicit repudiation of armed rebellion.

his condemnation, however, seems to have been that the conservative priests regarded him as a rebel against sacred tradition and feared that his claim to being a Messiah would cause trouble with the Roman government. The Jews as a nation were not responsible for his crucifixion.¹

The crucifixion of Jesus in 29 A.D., that is when he was in his thirty-fifth year, was an event of great significance. At first his death was viewed by his followers as the end of their hopes. But their despair soon vanished, for rumours began to spread that the Christ was alive and that three days after crucifixion he had arisen from his grave, appeared before certain of his faithful disciples including Peter and Paul (though not before the world at large)², showed them the marks of crucifixion on his body and then ascended to the heaven. Some modern scholars naturally doubt the reliability of the accounts of Resurrection but it was certainly a very early article of faith with the Christian community. It tended to increase its belief in the divinity of Christ. With their courage restored the Christians reorganised themselves and began preaching in the name of their martyred leader.

Teachings of Christ

Christianity was based chiefly on Judaism. Jesus never professed to abolish Judaism and to set up a new religion of his own. He says: 'Think not I am come to destory the Law of the Prophets. I have not come to destory but to fulfil'. But later on his teachings became the foundations of a new religion though there has never been agreement among Christians as to their precise nature. For this the only dependable records are the four Gospels, but the oldest of them was not written until atleast a generation after Jesus' death. However they make it clear that he included the following among his basic teachings: (1) the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man; (2) the golden rule; (3) forgiveness and love of one's enemies; (4) repayment of evil with good; (5) self-denial; (6) condemnation of hypocracy and greed; (7) opposition to ceremonialism as the essence of religion; and (8) the belief

¹Burns, E.M., Western Civilizations, New York, 1949, p. 198.

⁻Cf. Paul's first letter to the Cornithians which can be dated to 54 A.D.

in the resurrection of the dead, immanent approach of the end of the world and the establishment of the Kingdom of Heaven.¹

During his life time Jesus had gathered about him a group of fishermen and labourers and other unfortunates. They took delight in flouting the moth-eaten traditions of society. They were the militant radicals of Galilee, and Jesus became their leader. His character advanced rapidly from human maturity to divine mercy. He advanced the prophetic vision of a heavenly Kingdom. He, however, did not try to establish the Kingdom of God as the Jews of his day expected. They were hoping for a kingdom that was earthly, a world-empire with its capital at Jerusalem. The Kingdom of God as Jesus taught and sought to establish was entirely different. For that reason the Jews rejected him. The Kingdom of God, as Jesus taught, is the rule or reign of God in the hearts of men and in society. God's will is done in human lives even as it is done in heaven. It is a spiritual kingdom. The conditions of entrance to it are love, mercy, forgiveness, righteousness, and purity. "Whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, do likewise unto them." Its coming is gradual, and not sudden. Jesus taught in many parables and statements that the Kingdom was already here as a hidden treasure when he taught.

Perhaps the most important of the teachings of Jesus is the concept of the Father and his children. The Jews of his day thought of God as a stern judge with power as his principal quality. Jesus always spoke of God as a loving Father, and of people as his children.

Christianity was broadened and universalised by some of the followers of Jesus specially by Paul, a Jew. He denied that Jesus was sent as a the redeemer of Jews only and proclaimed Christianity to be a universal religion. He gave emphasis on Jesus as the Christ, the God-man, who existed from the foundation of the world, rejected the works of Law (i.e. Jewish ritualism) as of primary importance in religion and emphasised the significance of faith and grace.

Possibility of Indian Impact on Christianity Before its Advent in India

It has been claimed by some scholars that before the advent ¹Burns, op. cit., p. 199.

of Christianity Indian philosophy exercised a certain influence upon Greek philosophy specially on the ideas of Pythogoras, Eleatics, Thales, Anaximander, Heraclitus etc.¹ Others doubt it. Lassen, for example, denies Indian influence upon Greek philosophy in the pre-Christian period. He, however, adopts it for Christian Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism, and there is a general consensus of opinion in support of this view. Weber has traced the influence of the Indian conception of Vāk upon the idea of the Logos, which appears in Neo-Platonism and passed from there into the Gospel of St. John. "Garbe has pointed out that the conception of the Logos did not first appear in Neo-Platonism, but may be traced through Philo and the Stoics ultimately to Heraclitus. This corroborates the view, noted above, of Heraclitus's indebtedness to Indian philosophical views".²

The influence of Indian religious ideas in the western countries was made possible specially by the spread of Buddhism in western Asia, Africa and Europe as early as the days of Aśoka.³ There are unmistakable traces of Buddhist influences on the Manichaean religion, which was preached in the third century A.D. A Manichean treatise written in the form of a Buddhist sūtra speaks of its founder Mani as the Tathagata, and mentions the Buddha and the Buddhisattva. Some parallels are also noticeable between Buddhism and Orphism.4 According to the Syrian writer Zenob there was an Indian colony in the canton of Taron on the Upper Euphrates, to the west of Lake Van, as early as the second century B.C. These facts leave no doubt that, "when Christianity arose, Indian culture and religion was already an important factor in the region of its early activity. The similarities which undoubtedly exist between the two may not, therefore, be mere coincidences. Thus resemblances between the internal arrangements of the Christian Church and a Buddhist Chaitya Hall, the rigorous asceticism pursued by some early Christian sects such as Thebaid monasticism, metempsychosis, relic-worship and the use of the

¹Cf. AIU, p. 630 f.; contra Keith, JRAS, 1909, pp. 569-606. ²AIU, p. 632.

³Cf. Raychaudhuri, H.C., Political History of Ancient India, Calcutta, 1953, p. 614 ff.

^{*}AIU, p. 633.

rosary, might all have been borrowed by Christianity from Indian religious ideas. There is hardly any doubt that the Gnostics were profoundly influenced by Indian ideas. It is also a well-known fact that several religious leaders in the West took the name of Buddha, and that Gautama Buddha, under the title of St. Josaphat, is still recognised as a Christian saint".¹

Christianity in India: Mission of St. Thomas to the Court of Gondophernes

According to the legend of St. Thomas (Mar Thoma) Christianity reached India as early as first century A.D. during the reign of the Indo-Parthain king Gondophernes (Gondopheres)2 of Taxila (21-46 A.D.). Rufinus of Aquilea, a contemporary of St. Jerome, reports that when the Apostles cast lots as to the countries to which they were to carry the Gospel, Parthia fell to the lot of Thomas, Ethiopia to Metthew and to Bartholomew India Citerior by which name ancient geographers meant the western coast of India-Gujarat and North Konkan.3 The legend of St. Thomas is mentioned for the first time by Origen who died in the middle of the Third century A.D. and in the original Syrian text of the Acts of St. Thomas composed at about the same date as the writings of Origen. The story informs us that when India4 fell to the share of St. Thomas, he was sold by the Lord as a slave to an Indian merchant named Habban who was in search of a good artificer able to built a palace for the king Gudnaphar or Gundaphar (Gondophornes). The Apostle came to the city of Gundaphar via the harbour of Sandaruk or Andrapolis and ultimately

¹Ibid.; for similarities between the teachings of Christ and Hinduism, vide Buddhananda, Swami, "Jesus Christ and Vedānta", Vedānta Kesarī, L, No. 8, Dec. 1963, pp. 470-77; Siddhanta Sastri, Ravindra Kumar, 'Hinduism and Christianity Teach the Same Things', ibid., L, No. 8, March, 1964, p. 618 f.

²Gudnaphar (Syriac version), Goundaphores (Greek version); Guduhvara (Prakrit version).

³Subrahmanyam, Ka Naa, *The Catholic Community in India*, Madras, 1970, p. 5.

'The Acts of St. Thomas and later tradition generally associate the Indians, rather than the Parthians, with St. Thomas. As the Taxila region of India was ruled at that time by the Indo-Parthians, the confusian is understandable (EHI, p. 246).

succeded in converting the king and his brother Gad to Christianity. Later St. Thomas went to the South, to the city of king Mazdai, where he was put to death when he converted the queen and a noble lady (infra).1 Writers of later date, subsequent to the seventh century, claim to know the name of the city where the Apostle suffered martyrdom and variously call it Kalamina, Kalamita, Kalamena, or Karamena, though the place is anonymous in the earlier versions of the tale. The identification of the port called Sandaruk or Andrapolis, is also uncertain. According to V.A. Smith the whole story is pure mythology, but he rightly observes that "in as much as Gondophares certainly was a Parthian prince, and was too little known to the world in general to be named in a legend unless he really had some connection with the introduction of Christianity into his dominions, it is permissible to believe that a Christian mission actually visited the Indo-Parthians of the north-western frontier during his reign, whether or not that mission was conducted by St. Thomas in person. The traditional association of the apostle with that of king Gondophares is in no way at variance with the generally received chronology of the regin of the latter as deduced from coins and an inscription".2 He, therefore, concludes that "If anybody chooses to believe that St. Thomas personally visited the Indo-Parthian kingdom his belief cannot be considered unreasonable".3 According to G.M. Moraes, "it was possibly the existence of a Jewish colony at Takshaśilā that drew St. Thomas to this place. For it must be remembered that as a rule the Apostles preached the Gospel to the Jews first, and then to the Gentiles, and they must have been guided by this principle when they divided the countries among themselves for purposes of evangelization. Habban, mentioned in the Acte, is a Semetic name-from which it may be inferred that he was a Jew, and it may also be argued from the fact that Habban brought St. Thomas to India".4 In connection it is also interesting to note that one of the titles of

¹Cf. EHI, p. 246 f.; Moraes, G. M., Christianity in India, Bombay, 1964, p. 25 ff.

EHI, p. 248.

^{*}Ibid., p. 249.

⁴Moraes, G.M., *ibid.*, p. 28.

Gondophernes—Deva-vrata—has been taken by some scholars as an indication of his profession of Christanity.¹

St. Thomas in the South

King Mazdai, to whose capital according to the Acts of St. Thomas the Apostle left, cannot be identified in the present state of our knowledge. The traditions of the 'Christians of St. Thomas' on the western or Malabar coast on the other hand, assert that the Apostle, coming from Socotra in 52 A.D., landed at Cranganore (Muziris of Pliny and the Periplus) on that coast, and laid the foundations of seven Christian centres in the province. From there he passed over to the Malabar or Coromandel coast, where he suffered martyrdom at Mailapur near Madras reverenced as San Thome² by the Portugese. Scholars have variously opined on the reliabilty of the legend. Bishop Medlycott endeavoured to prove the historical truth of this tradition while, after its detailed analyses, J.H. Ogilvie concluded that St. Thomas preached the Gospel of Christ in India most probably in the Punjab, in the territories of King Gondopheres, but the story that South India was a later field of his labours and the scene of his martyrdom, is a tradition unverified, and now in all likelihood unverifiable. Dr. Mingana is rather uncertain on this point. "It may, or it may not, be true," he says, "that Thomas evangelized the Indians".3 Writing in 1927 J.N. Farquhar opined: "Thirty years ago the balance of probability stood absolutely against the story of the apostolate of St. Thomas in India; today the balance of possibility is distinctly on the side of his historicity." The most sceptical view is that of Garbe who has drawn the conclusion that the legend of St. Thomas in all its forms is undeserving of credit, and that the Christianity of Southern India probably came from Persia as a consequence of the persecutions in that country in

¹*Ibid.*, p. 30.

²Probably identical with the harbour Batumah (Beit Tumah, the House of Thomas) mentioned by the Arab merchant Sulaiman in 851 A.D.

³Mingana, A., Early Spread of Christianity, p. 4.

⁴Farquhar, J.N., 'Apostle Thomas in South India', quoted in CHI, IV, p. 548.

343 and 414 A.D.1 Accroding to Smith, however, although the alleged martyrdom whether in the kingdom of Mazdai or near Mailapur, may be rejected as unhistorical, it must be admitted that a personal visit of the Apostle to Southern India was easily feasible and that there is nothing incredible in the traditional belief that he came by way of Socotra, where an ancient settlement undoubtedly existed. Smith has also pointed out that though the actual fact of such a personal visit cannot be either proved or disproved, vet it is also a fact that the Christian Church of South India is extremely ancient, whether it was founded by St. Thomas in person or not, and that its existence may be traced back to the third century with a high degree of probability. Here it may also be noted that evidences for the Jewish settlements in South India, carrying on a flourishing trade with the various parts of the world are many and are found in the old texts. Pliny's Natural History and Ptolemy's Geography, among others, mention this fact.² The discovery of Roman coins dating from 37 to 68 A.D., including the coins of Caligula, Claudius and Nero, at varius places of Malabar associated with the Roman trade as well as at various other places like Arikamedu on the eastrn coast of South India also prove that movement between these areas was not difficult.3

The seven churches said to have been founded by St. Thomas are enumerated by W.J. Richards as (1) Kotta-kayalil, (2) Gokamangalam, (3) Niranam, (4) Chayil, (5) Kurakeni, (6) Quilon, and (7) Palur. G.T. Mackenzie gives the same list, with some variations of spelling, except that he substitutes Maliankara for Kurakeni. G. Milne Rae, however, gives the list as (1) Cranganore, (2) Quilon, (3) Palur, (4) Parur, (5) South Pallipuram or Kokamungalum, (6) Neranum and (7) Nellakkul, also called Chael or Shail⁴.

St. Bartholomew in Western India

When St. Thomas was active in the Punjab, St. Bartholomew, who had received India Citerior as the field of his mission, was

¹Quoted in EHI, p. 249, n.

²Subrahmanyam, Na Kaa, The Catholic Community in India, p. 2.

⁸ Ihil

⁴EHI, p. 260.

preaching the religion of the Christ in Western India. The tradition is constantly handed down by the Byzantine writers that St. Bartholomew went over to India Felix. Now, as pointed out by Moraes, Felix is a literal translation of the Sanskrit word Kalyāņa, meaning happy which was also the name of a city of Western India. Kalyāņa had, moreover, a Jewish colony, dating from ancient times, the Bene-Israel.1

It is quite probable, therefore, that the Apostle came to Kalyāņa because he had learnt of the existence of a Jewish colony there. But he probably succeeded in converting a number of Hindus as well, including the local ruler Polymius (Pulumāvi), whose lunatic daughter, according to an old tradition, he had cured. Tradition avers that this roused the local Brāhmaņas who probably complained to his brother Astreges (Arishtakarman?). The result was that Pulumāvi was forced to abdicate and Astreges or Arishtakarman ordered the Apostle to be whipped and beheaded. This took place according to the Hicronymian Martyrology 'probably in 62 A.D.'.2

In the second century the church at Kalyana is said to have sent messengers to Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria requesting him to send a scholar to help them in their disputation with the Brāhmaņas. Eusebius (third cent. A.D.) reports that Pantenus, who was a Stoic philosopher, was selected for the mission. He found at Kalyana a copy of the Gospel of St. Matthew in Hebrew in the handwriting of the evangelist himself, which had been left there by Bartholomew. When he returned, Pantenus took it with him to Alexandria.3

The history of the Christians of St. Bartholomew is thereafter intermingled with that of the Christians of St. Thomas, when the Persian Church established its control over the Indian Christians.

Post-Thomas and Post-Bartholomew Period

The Christain Church was more firmly established in South India

¹Moraes. op. cit., p. 43 f.

Subrahmanyam, op. cit., p. 5 f. The legend may contain some truth. If its reference to Polymius (Pulumāvi) is correct, then he must have been a Sātavāhana ruler of the pre-Gautamīputra Śātakarņi period.

^{*}McCrindle, quoted in AlU, p. 629, n. 1.

during the two succeeding centuries. The Council of Nicaea, held in 325 A.D., was attended by three hundred Bishops representing all the dioceses of the Christian world. One of them affixed his signature as 'John, the Bishop of Persia and Great India', though we need not draw any conclusion from this beyond the probable existence of Christian communities on the western borderlands of India. The stories of the visit of Theophilus and Frumentius to India in the fourth century A.D. are hardly credible; also, they had probably nothing to do with India. However, there is stronger evidence for the arrival in Malabar in 345 A.D. of a body of Christian immigrants from Persia and Mesopotamia who probably fled from there as a result of persecution by Shapur II. Their leader was Thomas Cananus, that is Thomas the Merchant (Knae Thomman). We have reference to the Christian community of South India in the Romance History of Alexander of the Pseudo-Kallisthenes (fifth century A.D.) also who mentions having visited South India where he was the guest of Moses, Bishop of Adule. More information about the Christian communities in India is furnished by Cosmas Indicopleustes who, in his Christian Topography, stats that "In the country called Male (Malabar) where the pepper grows, there is also a Church, and at another place called Calliana, there is moreover a bishop, who is appointed from Persia". From this it is clear that the constituency as well as the constitution of the Church on the west coast of southern India was Persian, and it appears that if had not as yet begun to associate the local inhabitants of the country in Church fellowship. The Christian community of this period was evidently of very little importance in Indian society, and there is no resason to suppose that it enjoyed greater power and prestige at any time before Cosmas.

The existence of this Nestorian community at Mailapur on the Coromandel coast has also been inferred from the cross which was discovered on St. Thoma's Mount in 1547. It has a Pehlavi inscription which has been assigned to the seventh or eighth century A.D. Similar crosses are found at Kottayam in north Travancore. These tend to show not only that before the close of the eighth century A.D. Christian settlements had spread along the

eastern as well as the western coast of South India Peninsula but also that these were connected with the East Syrian or Nestorian Church.¹

With the conquest of Iran by the rising power of Islam, the Nestorian Church suffered an irretrievable setback. It had prosperd under the Zoroastrian Sassanids but the new Islamic regime relegated the Christians to a class of inferior citizens, that of Zimmis, with all the disabilities which that status entailed. As a result it had to neglect its distant missions, leading to the complete disappearance of Christianity from the east coast of India though it was saved in Malabar and the west coast mainly because there the Christians succeeded in securing from the local chiefs a certain political status. After that there is very little information on the Church in India till the arrival of the Latin monks at the close of the thirteenth century.²

Christianity in India was much influenced by the life and culture of the indigenous people. For example, the caste system was at one time as widely prevalent among the Christians of South India as among the Hindus. Serious minded Indian Christians tried to reinterpret Christianity in terms of Hindu thought and life. At a later date some of them even established Christian āśramas. Many Hindu rituals, practices and ideas were also adopted by Christians and some chapels were built in the style of Hindu temples.3 The evidence for the Christian influence on ancient Indian thought is, however, quite scanty, though it is generally admitted that Christianity exerted some influence on later Vaishnava and Saiva theism. A great deal was at one time made of the parallelism between the Kṛshṇa legend and the Gospel story, and of the supposed resemblances between the Gospels and the Bhagavadgītā. But now the existence of the Krshna cult long before Christ is fully proved and no one can seriously contend that early Vaishnava doctrines and legends were influenced in any way by Christianity. We have

¹CHI, IV, p. 549.

²The Malabar traditions, particularly the chronograms representing the dates 317 A.D. etc. for some events connected with Christianity, do not deserve serious consideration in sober history. Cf. CA, p. 463, n. 4.

For details vide, CHI, IV, p. 557 ff.

already discussed this problem in detail (supra, pp. 197-206).1

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism is the revealed religion of ancient Persia. When Persia was conquered by Islam some of the Zoroastrian Persians fled to India either in 716 or 936 A.D.² and settled at a town celled Sanjan. Their earliest references in Indian epigraphy occurs in 999 and 1021 A.D.³ Today Pārsīs form a very small element of the Indian population.

Pre-Zoroastrian religion of the ancient Iranians, the ancestors of the present-day Indian Pārsīs, was the Iranian counterpart of the Vedic religion. It was marked by ritualism, ceremonialism and preisthood and its pantheon was akin to the Vedic pantheon. For example, the Vedic Mitra was known as Mithra, Yama as Yima, and so on. Their greatest ideal in life was expressed in the concept of arta or asha (Vedic rta). This religion was reformed by the prophet Zarathushtra or Zoroaster sometime about 1000 B.C.⁴ Zoroaster taught his followers ethical monotheism, declaring Ahura Mazda to be the only God. He called him the Lord of Supreme Good, all-powerful all wise and creator and ruler of the world, though he probably conceded a sort of internal dualism in Godhead. God sometime reveals himself to men through his archangles. The world is the battle ground of two forces - the

¹For the various aspects of the mutual impact of Indian religions and Christianity vide Radhakrishnan, S., Eastern Religions and Western Thought, London, 1969, Chapters IV-VIII; Indian Religions, Delhi, 1983 (Chapter on 'Hindu Thought and Christian Doctrine'); Tilak, B.G., Gītā Rahasya, Poona, 1983, p. 82 ff.; Devaraja, N.K., Hinduism and Christianity, Bombay, 1917; Suzuki, D.T., Mysticism: Christian and Buddhist, London, 1979; Thakur, S.C., Christian and Hindu Ethics, London, 1969; Osborne, Arthur, Buddhism and Christianity in the Light of Hinduism, London, 1959; Chai-Shin, Yu, Early Buddhism and Christianity, Delhi, 1981, Parrinder, Geoffrey, Avatar and Incarnation, New York, 1982. We propose to discuss the history of Christianity in ancient India in detail in a separate monograph.

^oCf. Hodivala, Studies in Parsi History, Bombay, 1920; Taraporewala, I.J.S., 'The Exact Date of the Arrival of the Parsis in India', Kane Festichrift, pp. 506-14.

^{*}AIK, p. 352.

^{&#}x27;Goyal, S.R., Viśva ki Prāchīna Sabhyatāyen, Gorakhpur, 1962, p. 503 f.

force of good as represented by Spenta Mainyu and the force of evil as represented by Agra Mainyu, also called Ahriman. Man has been granted freedom of choice—to remain on the side of the force of good or evil. Although prayer or worship of Ahura Mazda is also prescribed, in main religious life consists in the cultivation of moral virtues.

The chief ritual of Zoroastrianism is the fire ceremony. It seems to have been derived from the earliest times. According to a later tradition Zarathushtra was killed while performing the fire sacrifice. There is little doubt that Zarathushtra attempted to purify the old Aryan fire sacrifice which in the Vedic hymns centred on the figure of Agni. Modern Parsis pay much attention to the ritual of the fire-temples.

The Zoroastrian scriptures are known as the Avestā. Their extant parts are (1) the Yasna which include the most important texts, the gāthās, many of which go back to Zarathushtra himself; (2) the Vispārād, which contains invocations of 'all the lords' for use at festivals; (3) the Yashta which are collection of hymns to the various divinities; and (4) the Vendidad which contains prescriptions about purification etc.

After Zoroaster, Zoroastrianism underwent many changes at the hands of the priests who were called Magi. The priests reintroduced ritualism and the worship of the old nature deities in a new garb.

The jews received the ideas of heaven and hell, of angels and archangels, of Messiah, of the resurrection and the last day of judgment from Zoroastrianism.

Chapter 19

Religions from Beyond the Borders (ii): Islam

Life of Muhammad

The Arabs are a Semitic people. Towards the end of the sixth century A.D. they were divisible into two main groups—the urban Arabs of Mecca, Yathrib etc. who were mainly traders and craftsmen, and Bedouins who were mostly nomads.¹ They were still polytheistic, animistic and idolatrous and so far as one can judge, the images they revered were not anthropomorphic statues but megaliths of the type one associates with the Bronze Age.² To some extent they were influenced by Judaism and Christianity.³ Mecca, with its shrine al-Ka'bah was their most sacred city. A significant feature of the Arabian life about the year 600 A.D. was the presence of a number of wandering hermit ascetics known as hanifs with a monotheistic tendency and a craving for solitude. It was in this cultural atmosphere that Muhammad was born in Arabia.

The first record of the life of Muhammad was undertaken by ibn-Ishāq, who died in Baghdād about 150 A.H. (767 A.D.)⁴ and whose biography of the Prophet has been preserved only in the

¹Burns, Western Civilizations, p. 234; cf. Guillaume, Alfred, Islam, 1956, Ch. I.

²Bouquet, A.C., Comparative Religion, p. 264.

²Smart, Ninian, The Religious Experience of Mankind, New York, 1969, p. 476 f.

⁴As in a century of solar years we have 103 lunar years plus more than 24 days, the Christian equivalent of a given Hijrī year cannot be arrived at by merely adding 622 years to the figure of the Christian year.

fater recension of ibn-Hishām, who died in Egypt about 218 A.H. (833 A.D.).¹

Muhammad² was the son of a certain Abdullā, a member of the Arabian tribe called the Quaraish, an urban community engaged in commerce and handicrafts, to which was entrusted the guardianship of the national sanctuary at Macca with its sacred megalith. Abdullā died before the birth of Muhammad in 570 A.D.;³ the mother, Aminā, when he was about six years old. It therefore fell to the lot of his grandfather, 'Abd-al-Muttalib, to bring up the boy, and after the grandfather's death the duty devolved upon his paternal uncle abu-Tālib. Of his early youth and manhood little is known that can be called history. It appears that in his early years he was influenced by a certain Zaid, probably a Christian Jew.⁴ We also learn that from the age of twelve onwards Muhammad accompanied abu-Tālib on his journeys into Syria, where he appears to have heard and even seen much of both, Jews and Christians.

Up to the age of forty Muhammad lived in Mecca, a comparatively obscure individual, engaged in trade and business, and conducting the affairs of a certain wealthy widow, Khadījā, whose carvans went to as far as Syria and whom after a time he married. She born him six children, two of whom died early. After their deaths Muhammad became restless and in the words of the Meccans, he 'joined the hanīfs'. He began to hear voices, especially the one which said: 'You are the chosen one; proclaim the Name of the Lord'. Finally one night (known afterwards as the night al Qadr, that is 'the night of power') he had a kind of seizure in a cave, where a voice called to him, 'iqra', 'recite'. Then came the vision of Sūra I,5 written in fiery letters on a spread out cloth.

¹Guillaume, Alfred, *Islam*, 1956, p. 26. Among modern orthodox biographers of Muhammad reference may be made to Haykal, M.H., *The Life of Muhammad*, Delhi, 1976; Siddiqui, A.H., *The Life of Muhammad*, Calcutta, 1982; Afzal, Omar, *The Life of the Prophet Mohammad*, Rampur, 1978.

²This is the form which his name takes in the *Qurān*. However once the text calls him Ahmad.

³According to some in 569 or 571 A.D. Vide Hamidullah, Muhammad, Introduction to Islam, 1980, p. 5.

*Smart, op. cit., p. 477.

⁵Sūra is the name of the sections of the *Qurān*. Some scholars regard the first five verses of Sūra XCVI as the first revelation.

Muhammad believed that the voice he heard was that of the archangel Gabriel. He was terrified by the experience but shortly after this another Sura was revealed to him in wilderness, and from that time onwards he came to expect that he would receive these revelations at intervals. He resumed his ordinary mode of life as a merchant of Mecca, though he continued to talk to a few of his associates (including his wife who encouraged him) about certain ideas which had come to him, mainly with regard to the unity and absolute sovereignty of Deity, the fear of hell, the iniquity of idolatry and the reward to the faithful in paradise. first he and his friends remained an insignificant group, but after some time he began to preach more boldly. But as soon as he opened his attack on the cults of Mecca he found himself opposed by the leaders and guardians of the local sanctuary. However about 620 A.D. some people of Yathrib (later called Madinat-unnabī, 'prophet's town') mainly of the Khazraj tribe, met Muhammad and grew interested in what he had to say. Two years later a deputation of about seventy-five men met him secretly and invited him to make Yathrib his home. Muhammad accepted the invitation and went to their city. This event is called hegira (hijrah) - not actually a 'flight' but a scheme of migration carefully considered for some two years. Seventeen years later the Caliph Umar designated that lunar year (beginning July, 16) in which the Hijrah took place as the official starting-point of the Muslim or Hijrī era.

The Hijrah, with which the Meccan period ended and the Madinese period began, proved to be a turning point in the life of Muhammad. In the Madinese period the Arabianization of Islam was affected. The new Prophet broke off with both Judaism and Christianity; Friday was substituted for Sabbāth; the ajān (call from the minaret) was decreed in place of trumpets and gongs; Ramjān was fixed as the month of fasting; the qiblah (the direction to be observed during the ritual prayer) was changed from Jerusalem to Mecca; the pilgrimage to al-Ka'bah was authorized and the kissing of the Black Stone sanctioned. In 624 A.D. the Meccan emigrants (muhājirūn), with the help of the Madinese

¹Hitti, Philip K., History of the Arabs, London, 1960, p. 118,

(called ansār, supporters) defeated abu-Sūfyān, a Meccan carvan leader in the battle of Badr; in 629 A.D. the Jews were defeated for taking side with the Meccans; in 628 A.D. a pact was exacted with the Meccans on the basis of equality and finally in the tenth Muslim year (632 A.D.) Muhammad entered triumphantly at the head of the annual pilgrimage into Mecca which became his religious capital. He overthrew its aristocracy and destroyed its idols excepting the sacred Black Stone. Three months after his return to al-Madinah, he unexpectedly took ill and died complaining of severe headache, on June 8, 632.

Tradition, which there is no special reason for doubting, paints Muhammad as a man of striking appearance with a fine intelligent face, black piercing eyes and a flowing beard. He was taciturn in speech, possessed unusual insight, was gifted with eloquence, and was a lover of children. He despised grandeur and lived on an extremely frugal life, though he was no ascetic. He performed the most menial tasks with his own hands, and was essentially puritan. Though not a radical reformer he succeeded in changing several barbarous customs of his countrymen notably infanticide and cruelty to animals. He first forbade the drinking of wine before coming to prayer and then subsequently prohibited it altogether.²

Fundamental Tenets of Islam

Of the three monotheistic religions developed by the Semites Islam³ is the most characteristic and comes nearer to the Judaism of the *Old Testament* than does the Christianity of the *New Testament*. Muhammad taught that the Arabs were the decendants of Ishmael,

¹Hitti, op. cit., p. 120.

²Bouquet, op. cit., p. 270.

The name of this religion is not Muhammadanism but Islam and the name given to its followers is Muslim. In the Qurān Muhammad himself and all other prophets are called Muslims (Ali Maulana Muhammad, The Religion of Islam, New Delhi, p. 1). For the orthodox exposition of the tenets of Islam vide this work of Maulana Mohammad Ali and also Muhammad Hamidullah, Introduction to Islam, Lahore, 1974; Islahi, Sadruddin, Islam at a Glance, Delhi, 1978; Maududi, Syed Abul, A'la, Towards Understanding Islam, Delhi, 1981; Ahmad, Khurshid, Islam: Basic Principles and Characteristics, Aligarh, 1981; Siddiqi, M.M., What is Islam?, Delhi, 1983.

Abraham's eldest son. Moreover belief in monotheism, sanction of polygamy and the prohibition of usury, images worship and pork-eating are common to Judaism and Islam both. Muhammad also accepted the New Testament alongwith the Old Testament as divinely inspired book and regarded Jesus as one of the greatest of a long line of prophets.1 Besides, the Islamic doctrines of the resurrection of the body, the last judgment, rewards and punishment after death and the belief in angels were probably derived from Christianity. Muhammad conceded that God had revealed his will to the Jews and Christians but he also believed that they could not either understand or follow God's commands and agree to live in unity among themselves.

In dealing with the fundamentals of their religion Muslims distinguish between īmān (religious belief), 'ibādat (act of worship, religious duty) and ihsān (right-doing), all of which are included in the term dīn (religion). Īmān involves belief in God, His angels, His 'books', His messengers and in the last day. Its first and greatest dogma is: la ilāha illa-l-Lāh, no god whatsoever but Allāh. This is not simply the belief that Deity is One (tawhīd); it is also the character of the one Deity that Matters. 'Allah' is a contraction of Al llah, 'the Strong' or 'Mighty One'. The other primitive Muslim name is rabb, or 'Lord'. From this it is plain that Muhammad's basic conception of Deity is that of an absolute transcendent power-the creator, omniscient, omnipotent being, the self-subsistent. The will of Allah is entirely arbitrary, and can be changed at His pleasure in a contrary direction. His attributes (sifāt) of love are overshadowed by those of might and majesty. He has ninety-nine excellent names and as many attributes. The full Muslim rosary has, therefore, ninety-nine beads corresponding to His names. Islam is the religion of 'submission', that is 'surrender to the will of Allah'.2 The ideal believer, therefore, is the abd or slave (Hebrew ebed), and is submission personified and nothing else. This uncompromising monotheism, with its simple, enthusiastic faith in the supreme rule of the transcendent being, is the chief source of the strength of Islam.

¹Islam, however, could not hold that Jesus was divine since this would be setting up something else alongside Allāh (vide Smart, op. cit., p. 489).

²Bouquet, op cit., p. 271.

The second dogma in iman treats of Muhammad as the messenger (rasūl) of Allāh, His prophet (nabī), the admonisher of his people, the last of a long line of prophets of whom he is the seal (Khatam-al-Nabbīyin) and, therefore, the greatest. In the Qurān Muhammad is but a human being whose only miracle is the ijas of the Qurān but in tradition, folklore and popular belief he is invested with a divine aura.

The Qurān is the word (kalām) of Allāh. It contains the final revelation and is 'uncreated'. A Qurānic quotation is always introduced with 'saith Allāh'. The word 'qurān means that which is uttered or recited and it primarily denotes those utterances of Muhammad in which he was believed to be under the influence of direct inspiration. In its phonetic and graphic reproduction and in its linguistic form the Qurān is supposed to be identical and co-eternal with a heavenly archetype. Of all miracles it is the greatest.

Muhammad's earlier revelations were relatively brief. Later Sūras (as they are called) seem in general to be more artificial. The various remnants of the Prophet's teachings in the first instance were probably collected by Abū Bakr, about a year after Muhammad's death, at the suggestion of Umar, and the actual work was entrusted to Zaid ibn Thabit, an ansār of Medīna.³ However, there is no chronological or logical sequence in the sections (sūras) of the Qurān.

In its angelology Islam gives the foremost place to Gabriel (Jibrīl), the bearer of revelation, who is also 'the spirit of holiness' and 'the faithful spirit'. The worst and the only unpardonable sin in the eyes of Muslims is *shirk*, joining or associating other gods with the one true God. In Muhammad's mind 'the people of the book' (*ahl-e-kitāb*) i.e. the Christians and the Jews, were probably not included among the polytheists, though some hold a different view.⁴

The reality of future life is emphasized in the Qurān by the recurrent references to 'the day of judgment', also called 'the day of resurrection', 'the day', 'the hour' and 'the inevitable'. Future

¹Cf. Siddiqi, A.H., Prophethood in Islam, Delhi, 1974, p. 61 ff.; Maudidi, Syed Abul A'la, Finality of Prophethood, Delhi, 1979.

²The Hadith or Sunnat embellishes Muhammad's life with numerous miracles.

²Smart, op. cit., p. 479 f. ⁴Hitti, op. cit., p. 130.

life as depicted in the *Qurān* with its bodily pains and physical pleasures, implies the resurrection of the body.

The religious duties ($ib\bar{a}d\bar{a}t$) of the Muslim centre on the so-called five pillars ($ark\bar{a}n$) of Islam. They are the following:

- (i) Kalimā, or the recital of the creed, 'There is no Deity but Allāh, and Muhammad is his Prophet' (supra).
- (ii) Salāt, or the recital of the five daily prayers, accompanied by ablutions. The Friday noon prayer is the only public prayer and is theoretically obligatory for all adult males. One feature of the Friday service is the khutbāh (address) delivered by the imām in which intercessory prayer is offered on behalf of the ruling king.
- (iii) Fasting, especially during the lunar month of Ramjān. Though penitential fasts are prescribed a number of times, Ramjān as a fasting month is mentioned only once. That particular month, which may have been sacred in pre-Islamic days, was chosen because in it the Qurān was first revealed and the battle of Badr won.
- (iv) Zakāh or alms giving. Later it evolved into an obligatory tax on property, including money, cattle, corn, fruit and merchandise.
- (v) Hajj or pilgrimage to Mecca. Once in a life-time every Muslim of either sex, who can afford it, is supposed to undertake at a stated time of the year a holy visit to Mecca.

The duty of jihād or holy war has been raised to the status of a sixth pillar by at least one Muslim sect, the Khārijites. To it Islam owes its unparalleled expansion as a worldly power. It is one of the principal duties of the Caliph to keep pushing back the geographical wall separating the dār-al-Islām (the land of Islam) from the dār-al-harb (the war territory).

These religious obligations (*ibādāt*) constitute the fundamentals of Islam. But they are not the only ones prescribed by the *Qurān*. Right-doing (*ihsān*) has the same authority behind it. The sanctions of morality—private as well as public—in the Muslim society are all of a religious character. Basically the will of Allāh, as revealed through Muhammad, determines what is right (*halāl*, permitted, legitimate) and what is wrong (*harām*, forbidden). Of

¹Hitti, op. cit., p. 137 f.

the human virtues it insists on beneficence, in the form of zakāh, most urgently.1 There is denunciation of usury and games of chance, and of the consumption of pork and alcohol. Polygamy is granted to all.

The Muslims believe in the immortality of soul. On the day of resurrection the dead will rise to receive rewards and punishment of their deeds in life. Allah will send rain for forty days which will cover the earth to the height of 12 cubits and cause the bodies to sprout forth like plants.

Islam after Muhammad

Following the death of Muhammad in 632 A.D. his followers chose Abū Bakr, one of the earliest converts to the faith and the father-in-law of Muhammad, as the new ruler with the title of Khalifā (Caliph). After Abū Bakr, Umar and Usmān were chosen in succession from amongst the early disciples of Muhammad. During their Caliphate Arabs conquered Upper Egypt, Libya, Iraq, Persia etc. In 656 A.D., however, a war of succession broke out and supporters of Alī, the husband of Muhammad's daughter Fātimā, succeeded in making him the Caliph and deposing a member of the Ummayad family. However in 661 A.D. Alī was murdered, his son Hasan resigned in favour of Mu'āwiyā on the condition that after Mu'awiya he would again be accepted as Caliph. But Hasan died a few years later. His followers assert that he was poisoned at Mu'āwiyā's instigation, and therefore was a martyr. His younger brother Husain rebelled against Yazid who succeeded to the Caliphate in 680 A.D., but was killed with his small army of 200 at Karbalā. The victor cut off the head of Husain and sent it to Damascus. It was afterwards buried with his body in Karbalā, now one of the great sanctuaries of the Shī'as. Ummavads made Damascus their capital. But in 750 the Shī'as again revolted, founded the Abbasid Caliphate and moved the capital to Baghdad. It was during the Caliphate of the Ummayads that the Arabs conquered the Indian province of Sindh.

¹Ibid., p. 138. For the orthodox views on the moral aspects of Islam vide Maudidi, Syed Abul A'la, Islamic Way of Life, Delhi, 1983; Ethical View-point of Islam, Delhi, 1983; Muslehuddin, Muhammad, Morality its Concept and Role in Islamic Order, Delhi, 1982.

Thus with the death of Muhammad his followers became divided into two major factions or sects—those who upheld the succession of Abū Bakr, Umar and Usmān and those who did not recognise these three as lawful Caliphs. These two factions are respectively called Sunnī and Shī'a. In course of time these were subdivided into a number of sub sects and several new sects also arose.

Both Sunnī and Shī'a had a political as well as a religious character. The Sunnīs maintained that the head of the Islamic state and successor to Muhammad (Caliph or Khalifā) should be elected in accordance with the old Arabian custom. In matters of belief they held that sunnā or traditions which had grown up outside the Qurān¹ should also be accepted as the valid source of belief. Hence their name Sunnī. The Shī'as on the other hand held that the Caliphate should be restricted to the relatives of Muhammad—related to him either by blood or marriage. Further they were against anything but Qurān as a source of religious belief.

There were, and are, other differences also between the two sects. Islam claims that the prophets, specially Prophet Muhammad, were without sin and infallible. The Sunnīs differ among themselves and with the Shī'as as to the extent of this infallibility. Did it apply to all sin or only mortal sin? and could the prophets fall in the lesser sins of ordinary men? The Fiqh Akbar II, which probably dates from the tenth century, states: 'All the Prophets are exempt from sins both light and grave, from unbelief and sordid deeds'. It may, however, be noted that there is no trace of a doctrine of Muhammad's sinlessness in the cononical traditions.²

An important difference between Sunnī and Shī'a doctrines of infallibility and superhuman knowledge is that with the Sunnīs

¹The laws which govern Muslim custom (sunnā) in everyday affairs are adumbrated in the Qurān but for the details and the underlying authority for these rules one must go to the books of tradition (hadīth). After Muhammad an enormous number of hadīth found their way into circulation. The first collection to gain canonical authority was the Sahīh (the genuine) of al-Bukhāri (194-256 A.H.). Bukhāri's biographer says that he selected his material from no less than 600,000 hadīth. He reduced the vast number consisting of forgeries, repetitions or dubious reports to less than 3000.

Guillaume, Islam, p. 119 f.

infallibility is not a quality inherent in the Prophet by virtue of his being, but a special grace from God. His superhuman knowledge is given him from time to time by God, whose message he repeats to men. On the other hand, according to the Shī'a belief sinlessness and infallibility are in the Imāms and of them. They are the final authority in the interpretation of the Qurān, the source of all truth, and the only beings with the right to men's obedience. Alī and the Imāms are in a way incarnations of the Godhead, partakers of his attributes and powers, their bodies being but accidents inseparable from their visible forms. The Shī'as therefore, teach that the Muslims must believe in all the Imāms, and especially in the Imām of their own time. This belief was exalted to an additional 'pillar of Islam'.

Sūfīsm (Tasawwuf)

The Sūfīs represent the mystical trend in Islam. The word sūfī comes from the Arabic sūf which means 'wool'. The name sūfī was originally given to such Muslim saints who wore coarse woolen cloth³ as a symbol of renunciation of the worldly comforts. Later on the name was associated with the Muslim mystics. Tarachand has recognised five sources of Sūfīsm: (1) The Qurān, (2) Life of Muhammad, (3) Christianity and Neo-Platonism, (4) Hinduism and Buddhism, and (5) Iranian Zoroastrianism. Indian influence on Sūfīsm, however, was double—directly and through Greek philosophy.⁴

The essential features of Sūfī mysticism are not different from the usual characterstics of any mysticism. It is a kind of pantheistic monism. The Sūfīs take the union of soul with God to be man's ultimate end. This theme may look very unusual in Islam in face of its conception of God as a distant omnipotent master with whom man can have no equality or oneness. And it is of course true that the general spirit of Sūfīsm did not fit in with the spirit of Islam. But it is also true that (a) the germs of Sūfīsm may be

¹*Ibid.*, p. 120.

²Ibid., p. 118.

³Nicholson, R.A., 'Mysticism', in *The Legacy of Islam*, ed. by Arnold and Guillaume, Oxford, 1931, p. 211.

⁴Tarachand, quoted by Dinkar, R.S., Sainskṛti ke Chāra Adhyāya, Patna, 1962, p. 297.

traced in the Qurān itself, and (b) several great sūfī philosophers such as al-Ghazali have genuinely attempted to work out a reconciliation of Sūfīsm with Islam. In the words of R.A. Nicholson "Though Muhammad left no system of dogmatic or mystical theology, the Qurān contains the raw materials of both. Being the outcome of feeling rather than reflection, the Prophet's statements about God are formally inconsistent, and while Muslim scholastics have embodied in their creed the aspect of transcendence, the Sūfīs, following his example, have combined the transcendent aspect with that of immanence, on which, though it is less prominent in the Qur'ān, they naturally lay greater stress".

In the Quran, despite its preoccupation with battles and spoils, there is a strong note of other-worldliness also and to a lesser degree of mysticism. In the heart of those men who longed for a deep and intimate knowledge of God, discussion on anthropomorphism and pantheism found no place. They concentrated on such Quranic passages as: 'A people whom He loveth and who love Him', 'Allah is the light of the heavens and the earth', 'I have breathed into (man) of My spirit'. 'Wherever you turn there is the face of Allah', and so on. Surely the seeds of mysticism are there in these passages and give credence to the claim of the Sūfīs that they inherited their doctrines from Muhammad himself. By fervent prayer, by meditating profoundly on such passages the Sūfis tried to reproduce the Prophet's mystical experience in themselves. A sect of the Shī'as made these ideas clearer when it expounded the doctrines of ghulūb (the doctrine that man can attain the status of God) and tagsir (the belief that God can manifest Himself as man).

The foundations of a complete theory and practice of Islamic mysticism were laid by the Sūfīs in the 9th century A.D. Rabiā, the great female mystic, often spoke in a spirit of blind love for God: "My Beloved is with me always and for His love I can find no substitute". This sounds very much like Mīrā's love for Kṛṣhṇa. Similarly Nūn of Egypt introduced in Islam the idea of gnosis (marifā)—of knowledge which is given in ecstasy and differs altogether from traditional intellectual knowledge (ilm). Being asked now he knew God, he replied, 'I know Him through

¹Legacy of Islam, p. 212; cf. Guillaume, Islam, p. 143.

Himself.' The Persian Abū Yazīd (Bayazid), obviously under the influence of Indian monism, developed the doctrines of nāsūt (finite human qualities), lāhūt (infinite qualities of god), fanā (passing away of self) and baqā (the unitive life with God).

Before the third century A H. had ended, the Sūfis had worked out a method of attaining the gnosis or mystic knowledge of God. To many their language appeared and still appears to be blasphemy (kufr). A Persian used to cry 'Glory to me' during his ecstasies and claimed to have ascended the Heaven in dream. He also taught that to say 'I' and 'God' is to deny the unity of God. Lover, beloved and love are one.2 Junaid taught that when a man dies, his individuality becomes perfect through God and in God.3 His pupil Hallaj taught that man was God incarnate and that God is love and in His love He created man after His own image so that man might find that image within himself. His most heinous crime in the eyes of the orthodox was his claim Ana'l Hagg (I am the Truth) for which he was condemned to death (922 A.D).4 His doctrines brought the Sūfīs as a whole under suspicion and it must be admitted that the orthodox had much ground for complaint. A Persian mystic Abū Sa'id (1049 A.D.) regarded the Sharī'a as superfluous for those who had attained the mystic goal. He did not allow his disciples to go on a pilgrimage of Mecca and did not interrupt his dancing when the Muezzin called to orayer.5 Here was a clear departure from the practices of the early Sūfīs who faithfully observed the Sunnā.

The man who got recognition for the Sūfis by the orthodoxy and tried to reconcile Sūfism with Islamic theology was al-Ghazali (1059-1111). He was one of the greatest figures in the history of Islam. His autobiography is often compared with the Confessions of St. Augustine. He realized that the secret of mysticism cannot be learnt through books; it has to be experienced. The way is to practice dhikra, that is the commemoration of God and the

¹Nicholson, op. cit., p. 215.

^{*}Guillaume, op. cit., p. 145.

³Ibid.

⁴Ibid., p. 145 f.

^{&#}x27;Ibid., p. 147.

concentration of mind upon him. With him an era in the history of Sūfism ended.

According to the early Sufis perfect detachment from 'gods' involves perfect attachment with God through love. The mystic is forced to trust in Him alone (tawakkul) and surrender to His He sees the Lord in all. He experiences cosmic vision. He beholds his Beloved everywhere and in all objects. He has no sense of possession. He is free from egoism, lust, greed. anger, and pride. He is perfectly passionless and enjoys perfect peace and poise. He is like the Jīvanmukta, or liberated sage of the Hindu philosophy. He looks upon the heart as the Palace of the Beloved. He does not care for dogmas or doctrines, creeds or sects. Concentration, meditation, obedience to a guru (pīr), poverty, discipline, fasts, penances, japa or recitation of the sacred word (zikr), the use of rosary, music, rhythmic and controlled breathing, prayer, universal love, non-injury, detachment, introspection, dispassion, purity of heart, and self-control are the means to attain God or the Beloved through divine grace.

Advent and Early Influence of Islam in India

The militant character of early Islam and its extreme intolerance of other religions² marked its history at every step, and particularly in India. There was maritime intercourse from very early period between India, Arabia and Persia. It is, therefore, highly probable that some early Muslim traders, who frequented the Indian coastal regions, settled here on more or less permanent basis.³ M.A. Ghani has tried to show that the Muslims came to India as early as 637 A.D. and settled in large numbers not as fighters but as tradesmen and missionaries and that the Indians were so profoundly impressed with the purity of their living, their zeal for the new faith and their principle of universal brotherhood that they eagerly embraced the new faith in large numbers, about fifty thousand being converted each year.⁴ But as pointed out by

¹*Ibid.*, p. 148.

^aContra, Ahmad, Khurshid, Fanaticism, Intolerance and Islam, Delhi, 1982.

^aMajumdar, R.C., in CA, p. 455 f. Cf. for details Lal, K.S., Early Muslims in India, New Delhi, 1984.

⁴POC, X, p. 403.

R.C. Majumdar the evidence cited by Ghani is not reliable. However, it may be admitted that the conquest of Sindh by Muhammad ibn-Qāsim in 712 A.D. opened the gate of Muslim colonisation in this region. They followed a deliberate policy of making Islam a dominant force in Sindh both by settlements and local conversions with the help of humiliation and terrorisation of the conquered combined with material inducements to them. According to the Chach-nāmā "He who received the honour of Islam and became a convert was exempt from slavery as well as tribute and was not injured. Those, however, who did not accept the true faith were compelled to pay the fixed tribute (jizia)". This attitude served as a general pattern of Muslim policy towards the subject Hindus in subsequent ages.

However, as S.R. Sharma points out, considering the swiftness of the career of Muslim arms elsewhere, here in India the process of expansion was considerably slow, for, in spite of many attempts after the conquest of Sindh in 712 A.D., it was ony at the end of the 12th century A.D. that the foundation of Muslim empire in India could be laid.³ First the Gurjara-Pratihāras and later the Chāhamānas stood as a bulwark of defence against the aggression and further advance of the Arabs. Sulaiman refers to the king of Juzr, who may be identified with Bhoja (c. 836-882 A.D.), as 'unfriendly to the Arabs'.

With the decline of the Ghazanavids, the house of Ghor rose to power and Muhammad Ghori succeeded in achieving victory over Pṛthvīrāja Chāhamāna and Jayachandra Gahaḍavāla in 1192 and 1193 A.D. respectively. His general Bakhtiyar Khalji reached as far as the banks of the Brahmaputra. With these developments Islam obtained a firm political hold in India.⁴

The influence 'of Islam on India in this period was more destructive than constructive. The Islamic raids drained India of much wealth.⁵ Many scholars such as Havell, M. Habib and

¹Majumdar, op. cit., p. 456, n. 1.

²CA, p. 459.

⁸Sharma, R.S., JIH, April, 1959, p. 49.

⁴For a study of the place of Muslims in early medieval Indian society vide Lal, K.S., Early Muslims in India, New Delhi, 1984.

⁵Vide Gopal, L., The Economic Life in Northern India c. A.D. 700-A.D. 1200, Delhi, 1965, pp. 257-60.

M.N. Ray consider Islam as the harbinger of social revolution.¹ It has also been maintained by some scholars such as Tarachand that the increasing emphasis on monotheism, the rise of the emotional way of worship, the doctrine of prapatti (self-surrender), the adoration of guru, a degree of laxity in the caste system, the de-emphasising of the externals in religion etc. in Indian social and religious thought from the ninth century onwards were the result of Islamic influence.2 However, without rejecting the possibility of some mutual influence of Islam and Hinduism in this period, it must be emphasised that these features had become integral parts of the socio-religious life of India even before the advent of Islam. We have discussed almost all these points at appropriate places in this work or in its first volume. Monotheism, nay monism, is as old in India as the Vedic age. The importance attached to guru had become a cardinal principle of esoteric Buddhism and Śākta-Tāntrika sects. The doctrine of bhakti was intimately connected indigenous theistic religious thought and is older than the Gītā. The inefficacy of mere externals of religion was emphatically declared by the early Siddhas. The restricted admitting of Sudras in temples was conceded by many South Indian devotional saints and the ideal of social equality was advocated by Basava, the Lingayata leader and also by the early Siddhas.3

However, it can hardly be denied that the growing hold and expansion of the Muslims gave rise to new social problems and developments. The prejudices and ruthless activities of the Muslim invaders created a feeling of terror and aversion in the minds of the Hindus. The awareness of the danger to varnāśramadharma and the traditionally cherished religious ideals was heightened. As early as

¹Cf. M. Habib, 'Presidential Address', PIHC, Bombay, 1847; Roy, M.N., The Historical Role of Islam, Bombay, 1938, Ch. VII; Havell, Aryan Rule in India; cf. also for this problem R.C. Dutta, A History of Civilization in Ancient India, III, p. 476 ff.; Panikkar, K.M., A Survey of Indian History, p. 129; Nizami, Some Aspects of Religion and Politics in India during the Thirteenth Century, pp. 67-74.

²Tarachand, Influence of Islam on Indian Culture, 2nd ed., p. 112.

³Cf. Yadava, B.N.S., Society and Culture in Northern India in the Twelfth Century, Allahabad, 1973, p. 58 f.; Buddha Prakash, Aspects of Indian History and Civilization, Agra, 1965, p. 265 ff.

the ninth century Medhātithi viewed the political domination of the Mlechchhas so subversive to the social system based on chāturvarnya and to the Vedic rites as to turn even Āryāvarta into a Mlechchhadesa. In one of his inscriptions Vigraharāja IV Chāhamāna claims that he made Āryāvarta once more what its name signified by 'repeatedly exterminating the Mlechchhas'. The capture and conversion of people by the Muslim invaders also raised the problem of the purification and re-admission of the defiled persons to the fold of Hindu society. The Devala Smrti lays down various prāyaśchittas for the purification of such men and women as were defiled by the Mlechchhas. Alberuni refers to the orthodox view that a man who was taken away as a slave by the Muslims could not be accepted in the Hindu society after his return. But the Hindu feeling of hostility to Islam to some extent was reduced by the activities of the Sūfī saints who represented another type of Muslims. By laying stress on human values they started a process of rapprochement. Khwājā Muinuddin Chishti of Seistan (b. 1133 A.D.) made Ajmer the centre of his activities. As service to humanity was regarded by him as the highest form of devotion to God, he won great popularity. Of his two wives one is said to have been a Hindu. The Sūfī saints carried on their activities in Gujarat and other regions of North India, and in South India also. They thus became the bridge between the two societies.

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- 1. In this Bibliography most books, enlisted in the Bibliography of Volume One of this work but used in this Volume also, are not given.
- 2. Books on numismatic and epigraphic sources and the accounts of the foreign travellers (not listed in the Bibliography of Volume One) are given in the list of Original Sources.

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